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ASIAN STUDIES AMSTERDAM

Andre Gunder Frank

The Centrality of Central Asia

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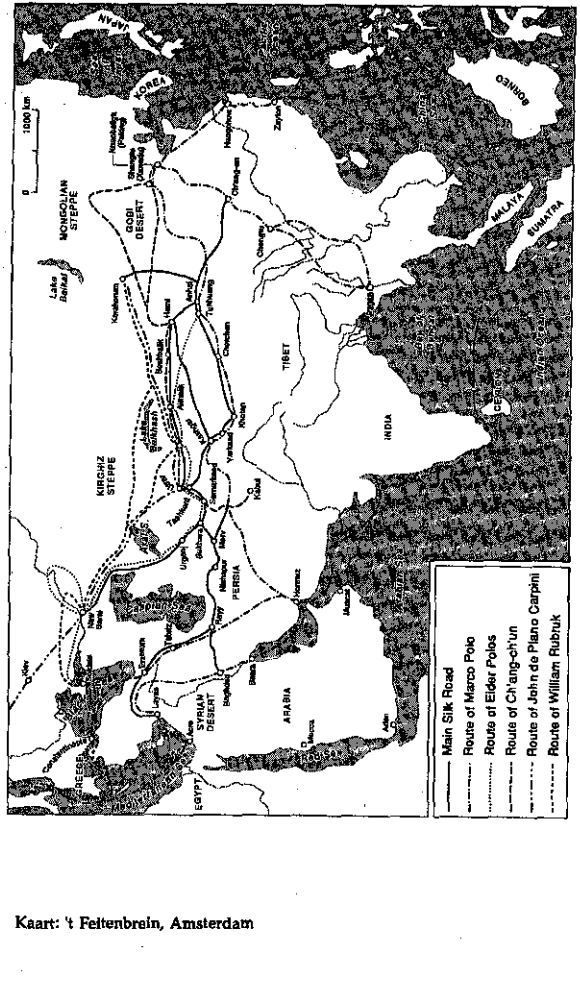

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Introduction: Scope and Method

How does Central Asia fit into world history? Questions about this arise from my attempt to study world history as a world *system* (Frank 1990a,b; 1991a,b; Gills & Frank 1990/91, 1992). From my non-specialist perspective the region appears as a sort of black hole in the middle of the world. Many non-specialist readers probably see it in the same way. Little is known or said about it by those who focus on the geographically outlying civilizations of China, India, Persia, Islam, and Europe including Russia. Even world historians only see some migrants or invaders who periodically emerge from Central Asia to impinge on these civilizations and the world history being made *there* (cf. McNeill 1963 and my critique in Frank 1990a).

Historians of art and religion view Central Asia as a sort of dark space through which these world-cultural achievements moved from one civilization to another. At best, they see Central Asia itself as a dark *tabula rasa* on which itinerant monks, mullahs and artists from these civilized areas left their mark. Their remains can be admired in the Thousand Buddha Caves and in mosques spread through Central Asia. Or they have been deposited in museums spread through the cultural capitals of the West and Japan after their 'discoverers' unearthed them, crated them up, and carted them away.

Central Asia is a black hole in the astronomical sense, too. It is darkly huge and hugely dark and sucks the life space of outlying peoples and their civilizations into the black hole at its center. It is not clear where civilized peoples and spaces end or where they interpenetrate with those of Central Asia. None of the civilizations are pristine. All of them were formed and even defined through interaction with Central Asia. Moreover, Central Asia is where all the outlying peoples and their civilizations connected and interacted with each other. Indeed, for millennia the Pulse of Asia (Huntington 1907) probably came from its Central Asian heartbeat. Central Asia is truly the 'missing link' in Eurasian and even world history.

Central Asia is also central to any attempt at systematic or systemic analysis of the history of the world *system*. Analysts of world system history should inexorably and willingly be drawn into this black hole. As matters stand today, however, Central Asia is perhaps both the most important and the most neglected part of the world and its history. There are at least three broad reasons for this neglect:

History is mostly written by the victors for their own purposes, especially

to legitimize their victory. While Central Asia was home to many victors for a long time, they wrote or left few histories of their accomplishments. Then, since the fifteenth century, Central Asian peoples have been mostly losers in two ways. They have lost out to others on their home ground, and their Central Asian homelands ceased to be so central to world history. These two losses were intimately related to each other: the world-historical center of gravity shifted outward, sea-ward and westward.

Secondly, history is usually written from *a* national perspective; it tells of 'nation'-states or, at best, of 'civilizations.' That, too, is because history is written by the victors. Moreover, national(ist) or not, historical writing or written history has been overly Eurocentric. Eurocentrism or 'Western-centrism' has formed (and deformed) not only historical writing about 'the West,' but also about 'the East' and 'the South.' Many non-Western historians writing about their own countries and cultures have in fact been infected by the virus of Eurocentrism, which blinds people to Central Asia and especially to anything important or good coming out of it. Sino-centric, Indian-centric, Persian-centric, Islam-centric and other histories omit adequate reference to Central Asia and its great influence on their own histories. 'Civilized' peoples write their own histories about themselves and not about their 'barbarian' neighbors, whom they consider beyond the pale. Christopher Beckwith (1987; 1990) has argued that it is high time to stop the injurious appellation of Central Asian peoples as 'barbarians.' I agree (cf. Frank 1990a), and to convince others of this is one reason for writing this essay.

Finally, very few write international history; almost nobody writes *world* history. Therefore, the millennial centrality of Central Asia in inter-'national' relations and in world history, not to mention world *system* history, goes virtually unnoticed. Only authors specializing in some *part* of Central Asia take notice of this, but they in turn tend to be overlooked by others. Moreover, for nearly two generations, political circumstances in Soviet and Chinese Central Asia and Mongolia closed much of the area to foreign researchers. In consequence of this a generation gap developed among students of Central Asia outside the area. Fortunately, a new generation of scholars, journalists and publicists is showing renewed interest in Central Asia. Dramatic ethnic movements and current political developments in the area will undoubtedly attract increased attention. It is to be hoped that these events will not close the borders to researchers again. Today, Central Asia is waiting to be discovered by the outside world, as is yesteryear's centrality of Central Asia in the history of this world outside.

Thomas Barfield recently observed that

> the main obstacle to creating a coherent Inner Asian history has always been the lack of an appropriate analytical framework which made sense of events there.... The Mongolian steppe, north China, and Manchuria must be analyzed as part of a single historical system. (Barfield 1989:2, 12)

It seems to me that, even if we restrict ourselves to the history of Inner or Central Asia, we would have to go beyond that. An 'appropriate framework' would have to encompass not only these three areas; it would have to include even more than all of Central Asia. An appropriate analytical framework must embrace the entire Afro-Eurasian world system, the hub of which was Central Asia.

My purpose is not to write an Inner Asian history. My present intent is to help clarify the role of Central Asians in the history of their neighbors, that is, their place in a *world system* history. This requires a broader approach, systemic in scope and analysis. I will address a dozen issues, suggest some alternative or tentative answers, propose four systemic structures and offer two conclusions.

The twelve issues I raise concerning Central Asia in world history are these:

1. The definition or location of Central Asia;
2. Ecological and climatic factors;
3. Migratory movements;
4. Challenges to and responses by Central Asia's neighbors;
5. Technological change;
6. State formation;
7. Gender relations;
8. Ethnogenesis and ethnicity;
9. Religion;
10. Special nexuses;
11. *Inter*-national trade;
12. Inter-'national' political economic relations in the world system.

All of these questions have special relevance today, which is why I selected them. Of course, this list is not exhaustive, since I leave aside several important and popular themes (art, kinship, language, war, etc.).

Next, I consider four systemic structures and processes derived from the study of the contemporary world system, which may be useful also to study the place and role of Central Asia in world history. These are 1) the process of accumulation, 2) core-periphery structure, 3) hegemony-rivalry alternation, and 4) political-economic cycles in all of the above.

Two conclusions may be briefly anticipated. First, we should hasten to get rid of the popular image of Central Asia as the home of 'barbarian nomads.' Central Asia was also home to many highly civilized and urbanized peoples. Yet even when many people were nomadic pastoralists, they were no more

[illegible] than many of their sedentary 'civilized' neighbors. In-[illegible] of the very term 'barbarian' in contrast with 'civilized' is without [illegible]

The second conclusion concerns pastoral nomadism. It was not a 'transitional stage' from hunting and gathering to agriculture to urbanization. On the contrary, much nomadic and highly specialized pastoralism was probably the adaptive reaction to ecological, climatic and economic exigencies by agricultural peoples *who had once been settled*. Even the Bible ascribes temporal precedence to the latter. In fact, as forms of existence nomadic pastoralism and settled agriculture have long been complementary and alternative, transitory and sequentially interchangeable. It obscures more than it clarifies to regard nomads as a type of people and nomadism as a permanent way of life, rather than as a transitory form of socio-economic organization. It makes no sense to regard 'Central' (or 'Inner') Asia and its many different peoples as somehow all different from the rest of the world then and now. There was and is unity in diversity, and Central Asia was not apart from but constituted the core of this reality of human history and existence.

1. *Central Asia in World History: Some Questions*

1. *Definitions of Central Asia*

Where and what is Central Asia? Or Inner Asia? Are they the same or different? Denis Sinor (1969:5) regards them as 'virtually synonymous.' Reference to *Inner* Asia seems to be a more American usage. *Central* Asia is the usual reference in Europe (and in the region itself). Harvard has an 'Inner' Asian Center and Newsletter, and London has a 'Central' Asian one but they seem to cover the same area. On the other hand, American authority Denis Sinor (1969, 1977, 1990) uses 'Inner Asia' in his titles but prefers 'Central Eurasia' as a more accurate and self-explanatory, if more awkward, denomination.

Whatever the name of the area, varying definitions and boundaries have been suggested by different scholars and publicists. Toynbee (1934) delimited precise latitudes and longitudes. Gavin Hambly (1969:xi) begins his study of Central Asia with the warning that 'as a geographical expression the term 'Central Asia' tends to elude precise definition.' Geographically, Hambly features its isolation from oceanic influences, which reduce precipitation and increase aridity. Bounding Central/Inner Asia on the south, he finds some four thousand miles of mountain ranges between China and the Black Sea. However, he recognizes that historically the Tibetan and Iranian plateaus south of the mountains have been inextricably linked to Central Asia to the north. The eastern and western limits of Central Asia are even less easily defined: along the Great Walls built by the Chinese, and the Ukrainian-Romanian-Hungarian plains. To the north, there is no identifiable boundary, unless it is where the tundra becomes virtually uninhabitable in the Siberian cold. Thus, one set of mountain ranges running from southwest to northeast helps delimit Inner Asia from the centers of civilization to the south and east. Another lower and more or less parallel range divides the arid desert belt—punctuated by a long chain of oases—between these ranges from the steppe and tundra grasslands to the north.

Denis Sinor (1969) prefers more socio-culturally defined boundaries. He suggests that

> the definition that can be given of Central Eurasia in space is negative. It is that part of the continent of Eurasia that lies beyond the borders of the great sedentary civilizations. This definition implies that the frontier is unstable. . . . Essentially it is a cultural barrier that exists in the heart of man. (Sinor 1969:2; cf. 1977:95)

Sinor (1977) adds the analogy of a volcano. Occasionally, the volcano erupts and its molten core of magma overflows into the outlying sedentary civilizations, which try to contain it. Later, however, the lava hardens, is assimilated into the surrounding crust and then helps to contain new eruptions and the forces that propel them. Hence, Sinor, too, sees the 'center' of 'inner' Asia as tendentially shrinking.

Anatoli Khazanov (1979), from the Soviet Union and now in the United States, is more precise, and distinguishes Middle Asia from Inner (Central) Asia. He limits the latter to Kashgaria, Jungaria, Mongolia and Tibet. Khazanov's Middle Asia is the region between the Caspian and Aral Seas in the west and north and bounded by the Hindu Kush and the Pamir mountains in the south and east. He further distinguishes between the now Arabic Near East and the Middle East, where he places Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. Yet he recognizes that historically much of the latter were very much part of Middle, Central or Inner Asia. Some authors argue that socio-politically speaking, Manchuria was historically also part of Central/Inner Asia. But so were much of Siberia and Southern Russia, the Ukraine and other parts of Eastern Europe.

The people of Central Asia do not call themselves 'Central Asians.' Rather they tend to identify with (and themselves as) this or that ethnicity. However, the same ethnic denomination has been claimed by or ascribed to different peoples at different times. In addition, over the centuries, the 'same' people have gone through various different ethnic names before adopting their present identity only very recently, as Gladney (1990) shows about the Uighurs in China for instance.

Meanwhile the 'Inner Asian Frontiers' of China, as Owen Lattimore called them, move back and forth. So do, or soon again may, the boundaries of Soviet 'Central' Asia. The Chinese call their Central Asian region a part of Western China. They expressly do *not* like it to be called 'Eastern Turkestan.' The boundary is likely to shift again in the near future: people in Tibet and the Sinkiang Autonomous Uighur Region, and their supporters abroad, seek to reverse Chinese administration and sovereignty, as even the *Beijing Review* recognizes (Vol. 33, No. 34, of August 20–26, 1990).

Herodotus already asked why we should distinguish between Europe and Asia (and indeed, Africa), when geographically and socially, i.e. historically speaking, there is only one continent of Eurasia (or Afro/Eurasia). So where does its center begin and end? Like him, we can wonder how much of present-day China, Russia, India, Pakistan, Iran, or even European Hungary, etc. were effective working parts of Central Asia during what times of their history? Speaking of Europe, what about the Magyar, Bulgars, Turks and others who migrated as recently as in medieval times; or Dorians, Hittites, and many other

populated Greece and the Levant in classical and ancient times?
Aryans went to India and Indo-'Europeans' and their languages
Europe. Yet all originated in Central Asia. So where and when does
begin and end?

and Climate

did ecology and climatic change have on human settlement and
Central Asia, on its boundaries and in neighboring areas? And
how did human habitation and use of the environment maintain
More than other regions in the world, Central Asia is marked
steppes and deserts as well as high mountain ranges whose
off permits habitation, also in desert oases. Consequently,
elsewhere, habitation was and still is often at marginal subsistence
sensitive to minor changes in delicate ecological balances. Slight climatic
change can have large human consequences—and vice versa.
and interpretations of determinant factors cover the whole
variations from ecological determinism to social determinism.
(1904) proposed climatic explanations. Ellsworth Huntington's
Asia: A Journey in Central Asia Illustrating the Geographic Basis
(1907) and *Civilization and Climate* (1915/1971) argue for ecological
determination. 'History can never be written correctly until its physical basis is
thoroughly understood' (Huntington 1915:20). Lattimore (1940/1962) urged
environmental interpretations. Yet even he recognized that, of course, different
ecological bases supported different settlement and land-use patterns
oases, hill country and alluvial plains.

Particularly important is the question of just when and how (much) climatic
changes have influenced patterns of settlement, land use, and migration in
parts of Central Asia—and hence in other parts of the world. Huntington
found a dry period from 1400 to 1200 B.C., moist conditions from
to 800 B.C., greater dryness around 200 B.C., and better conditions when
was living. These were followed by renewed desiccation reaching its cli-
max A.D. 650, improvement until about A.D. 1000, renewed dryness cul-
minating the thirteenth century followed by a recovery and then minor fluc-
tuations of climate. Huntington saw climatic degradation leading to economic
and political instability, and increased migration. Conversely, he felt that

> the repeated coincidence between periods of improving climate and periods of cultural progress appears to be due not only to the direct stimulus of climate . . . but to the stimulus combined with a high racial inheritance due to natural selection. (Huntington 1915:28)

Huntington's geographic and climatic determinism, including on character formation, is now mostly discarded (but we will encounter its resurrection by DeMeo in the discussion of gender relations below). There seems to be no generally accepted theory of climatic change and the thesis that tendential warming, desiccation, and desertification engendered the conversion of sedentary agriculturalists into nomadic pastoralists is subject to much dispute. Prince Kropotkin (the anarchist!), Toynbee and others gave it credence. The Russian and American authorities, Barthold (1956:13) and Lattimore (1962) rejected it. Contemporary writers such as Khazanov (1979:87–95) regard climatic change as an important, though no necessary and certainly no sufficient explanation for the emergence of nomadism and other social changes.

Still, climate and ecology seem to deserve more attention than social scientists and historians are usually willing to give them. In Central Asia especially, small changes in global and regional temperature move the snow line up and down the mountains and alter the resulting water-off flow. Habitation in the lowland steppes, oases and even plains depends on this. Moreover, the amount and geographical pattern of precipitation and summer and winter temperatures change in the low lands. Therefore, the amount and location of agricultural and grazing land and deserts changes, as does the 'frontier' between them. Areas of settlement and pasturage, and of migration or invasion, were affected accordingly. Therefore 'the Inner Asian frontiers,' not only of China but also with other neighboring peoples and among Central Asians themselves, were subject to periodic adaptations to climatic change. For instance, did climatic change contribute to the decline of the Hsiung Nu and the early (and later?) Han Dynasty in China? Did the climate help change Han Chinese relations with peoples in Central Asia and contribute to their westward migration and invasion into Europe? Did a regional increase in temperature in East Central Asia during the early fourteenth century contribute to the increase in the population of rats there? These, in turn, helped spread the Black Plague across most of Eurasia in the third and fourth decades of the century. Did they follow the Mongol advance, which may at least in part have occurred in response to climatological impulses? Migrations and land use or disuse, also by deforestation and through irrigation destroyed by warfare, could also affect the environment in general; and alter precipitation and erosion in particular. We will take note of some major historical migratory movements through and out of Central Asia below. I leave open the question as to the extent to which they were induced by the climate.

3. *Migrations*

When and what were the major migratory movements out of Central Asia? What were the causes and effects, there and elsewhere? It is commonplace to observe that peoples from Central Asia crossed the (then land bridge of the?) Bering Straights to settle the Americas. Increasing evidence also points to eastward maritime migrations to the New World from Southeast Asia and the Islands across both the South and Central Pacific. However, even these people of Indian and Malay origin—who also populated Madagascar—could have come from or experienced impulses from Central Asia.

Central Asian peoples repeatedly migrated to outlying areas. From a European perspective, Marija Gimbutas records radiocarbon evidence of three major westward thrusts of migratory waves by steppe pastoralists in 4300–4200 B.C., 3400–3200 B.C. and 3000–2800 B.C. (cited in Eisler 1987:44). For more recent periods, William McNeill (1963), Gavin Hambly (1969), E.D. Phillips (1965), and other secondary sources have also observed recurrent waves of migration emerging from Central Asia and fanning out in all directions. However, the predominant trek was westward; perhaps, as Khazanov (1979:173) suggests, because that is where the more fertile and richer regions were. Each of these waves straddled some 200 years and they occurred in intervals of about 500 years. Huntington (1907, 1915) attributed these recurrent migrations to a 640-year cycle of climatic change in Central Asia. Others dispute this. Gills and Frank (1990b) suggest the existence of long cycles of approximately 200-year upswings and 200-year downswings in economic growth and hegemonial expansion, which we have tried to identify since 1700 B.C.

Whatever the reasons for the migrations, perhaps by 1900 B.C. and certainly between 1700 and 1500 B.C., Hittites and Kassites moved to Asia Minor, Aryans moved into India and Iran and the Hurrians and Hyksos went to the Levant and Egypt. These and other migrations out of Central Asia affected not only each of the receiving regions and peoples. The consequences also altered the relations among these outlying peoples and regions themselves, as for instance those between Mesopotamia and Egypt.

Another major migratory movement occurred around 1000 B.C., probably from 1200 to 900 B.C. Indo-Europeans moved eastward and perhaps became ancestors of the later Tocharians of the Tarim Basin in Xinjiang. Phoenicians, Arameans, Dorians and others moved into the Levant and Greece. They contributed to dramatic developments in Assyria, including Nineveh and Babylon, and later in Persia and Greece.

Some five hundred years before the birth of Christ, the movement of the Massagetae drove the Scythians westward, and they in turn pushed the Cimmerians to the west and south. The latter crossed the Caucasus and arrived in

Asia Minor in 680–670 B.C. Later, Herodotus recorded their incursions—and their supposedly exceptional savagery—for history. They were followed by the Sarmatians.

At the beginning of the Christian era, migratory movements emerging from Central Asia contributed to far-reaching changes. On China's 'Inner Asian Frontier' the Ch'in and Han rulers fought off the Hsiung Nu in Zungaria across the Tien Shan Mountains. To do so, the Chinese tried to enlist the aid of the Yue Chi along the Kansu (Haxi) Corridor and Dunhuang. However, the Hsiung Nu defeated the Yue Chi, who migrated westward. It is still disputed whether the former became the Huns who later invaded Europe. However, the latter did conquer the Saka people and/or the Bactrian successors of Alexander the Great. Their descendants founded the Kushan Empire, which ruled northern India. Parthians invaded Persia from the north to conquer the Selucids who had taken over there from Alexander.

Around A.D. 500, new movements of peoples from Central Asia spread in all directions and had domino effects. Ephtalites moved into India, Goths and Huns into Europe (Attila attacked Rome in 452). Tang China, western and eastern Byzantine, Rome, Persia, and the later spread of Islam would not have become what they did without the impact of these migrants and invaders from Central Asia. Before A.D. 1000, the Turks, who originated in the Altai near Mongolia, moved into Anatolia, which became Turkish and eventually Turkey. Perhaps the most memorable migration and invasion was the movement of the Mongols under Genghis Khan and his successors to Tamerlane in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The world's largest empire they created was only shortlived. But its consequences were lasting and far-reaching in the development of Ming China, Moghul India, Safavid Persia, the Ottoman Empire, and perhaps even through its effects on subsequent European development and expansion.

Migrations in, through and out of Central Asia must still be reviewed as both cause and effect of the long-term evolutionary and cyclical history of the Eurasian ecumene as a whole—and perhaps as an expression of the process of accumulation in the whole world system, which we will invoke at the end of this essay. However, a note of caution about migrations should be expressed as well. Igor Diakanoff (1990) suggests that not all supposed mass-migrations really occurred. The evident diffusion of languages through Eurasia, for instance, need not have come about only through massive migrations of peoples who spoke these languages. Rather, according to Diakanoff, many languages were passed on from one population to another like a baton in a relay. This, he suggests, was the case with the spread of Turkic languages, more so than through massive westward migration, for which he finds little genetic and other evidence. Diakanoff expresses similar reservations about the diffusion

of Indo-European languages through earlier migrations. If Diakanoff's reservations about migrations and his alternative explanations in terms of economic and political contacts are well taken, the thesis of systemic linkages across Afro-Eurasia gains additional support.

4. *Challenges to and Responses by Civilization*

What were the challenges that these Central Asian incursions posed to their neighbors, and how did the latter respond? We may recall that Toynbee (1934, 1946) placed great emphasis on the responses of civilizations to the challenges they encountered, both inside and outside themselves. 'Time and again they [peoples from Central Asia] developed military powers capable to change the course of history of urban civilizations' (Azzaroli 1985:66). Stavrianos suggests that 'the ancient, the classical, the medieval periods of pre-1500 Eurasian history . . . were heralded by major turning points primarily attributable to these nomadic invasions' (Stavrianos 1970:6).

Similarly, McNeill (1963) observed important civilizational impulses all around Eurasia *after* the periodic incursions from Central Asia. McNeill insists that beyond the 'civilizing' of the 'barbarian' arrivals civilization itself benefited from and responded positively to the newcomers.

> Throughout its length this Eurasian civilized belt confronted steppe nomads whose raids and migrations continued, like ocean waves, to break from time to time upon the fringes of civilized, sedentary societies. Indeed, the nomad challenge was sufficiently important that the political history of the ecumene may in large part be understood as the consequence of shifting pressures brought from the steppes against the various segments of the civilized world. (McNeill 1963:316–17)

> [The] resurgence of civilized imperial power [was] drawing at least part of its strength from a 'native reaction' against foreign intruders (389). . . . The civilized communities of Eurasia (excepting China) were impelled to modify their military, political, and social systems by introducing many of the features we are accustomed from European history to term 'medieval.' (391)

And conversely:

> As commercial [and other] links among the major Eurasian civilizations weakened, outlying areas were thrown back more exclusively on their own resources. Interruption of drastic diminution of contacts with the outer world then allowed the local peoples to elaborate their own styles of life, while making use of civilized elements which had come to their attention during the earlier, more cosmopolitan, and better traveled age. (McNeill 1963:362–63)

To be sure, except that the same thing was also true of outlying areas' relations with Central Asia, and except that China was not so much of an exception in

this respect, as we will observe below. Khazanov (1979) notes that Lattimore in his last work concluded that nomad incursions promoted the unification of China. Yet ever more cautious, Khazanov himself only asks 'by way of a conclusion' whether

> in Chinese, Middle Eastern and Near Eastern societies ... the general direction of evolution and tempo of evolution ... [was] affected by the fact that they were frequently conquered by nomads? If so, in what way? These are all themes for further research rather than problems which have already been solved. (Khazanov 1979:303)

A world systemic approach, such as that proposed below, can offer an analytical framework to further this research.

5. *Technology*

What technology was developed or improved in Central Asia and/or in response to it? Today, technology is widely regarded as a major if not the exclusive driving force of development and civilization. Scientific and technological development itself is associated with 'Western civilization.' Unfortunately, much technological development is today and always was derived from the military sector and the competitive pressures of political, economic and military rivalry. For centuries various parts of the West (and Japan more recently) have taken the lead in technological development. Joseph Needham (1954) has devoted a lifetime to writing *Science and Civilization in China* as a balancing corrective, especially for earlier times. Others recall the development of agriculture, astronomy, alphabets, Arabic numerals (apparently invented in India, which maintained close contacts with Central Asia), especially the number 0, and other contributions to knowledge and technology by other civilizations. In this regard again 'barbarian' Central Asia is made to appear as a dark void. Is this really a fair and balanced accounting?

There is substantial evidence that many military, transportation, and livestock developments came from Central Asia. Other developments were made by the outlying civilizations in response to their relations with Central Asians. Horses and (Bactrian) camels, and probably sheep were put to human use and domesticated in Central Asia. Domestication of the horse began in Czechoslovakia, the Ukraine and southern Russia about 6000 years ago; but the most important developments occurred farther east in Central Asia in the second millennium B.C. For thousands of years these animals were the main source of human overland transportation, military superiority, animal protein, warm clothing, tenting, etc. Moreover, the developments were complemented by others in transportation and military technology and *metallurgy* (especially in the Caucasus), much of which also came from Central Asia.

Sinor (1977:171) notes that the horse was certainly the *ultima ratio* of Inner Asian power, as generations of Chinese recognized. The incursions of Central Asians into 'more' civilized outlying areas in the period 1700–1500 B.C. were victorious largely on account of the horse-drawn spoked war chariots, which were developed or improved in Central Asia. They must also have brought with them a social organization, which was effective enough to organize their military campaigns and to make them victorious over their 'more' civilized neighbors. As noted, around 1000 B.C., Central Asian incursions were again victorious. They had again made important advances in transportation and military technology, including metallurgy to bring on the iron age. This time they *rode* larger, domesticated horses and came armed with weapons made of iron. The fact that Central Asians were again victorious suggests that they had developed something of value in a competitive world. Their more sedentary neighbors also developed technology and social organization in response to their relations with Central Asians and, of course, with each other. This organization includes the formation of states and the organization of political power.

6. *State Formation*

What was the role of Central Asia in state formation and political organization, also in outlying civilizations and empires? 'The origins of the state' is the subject of a long-standing debate, which is beyond our present scope. The formation of states and their administration has almost universally been interpreted as a function of the 'internal' needs of 'societies' to organize their economy, society, culture, and therefore also polity.

However, the distinction has also been made between 'primary' states whose origin is sought within its own 'society' and 'secondary' states, which develop at least in part in response to another (primary) one. Malcolm Webb (1975) proposes instead the terms 'intrasystemic' for the probably only six or eight primary state areas (including Meso America and Peru) and 'intersystemic' states for the many formed by processes involving long-distance contact. Ronald Cohen (1978) distinguishes between (theories of) state formation based on 'internal' factors and those based on 'inter-polity relations.' Among the latter, inter-polity long-distance trade, the exaction and/or payment of tribute, and warfare are major reasons to form a state. The objective is to facilitate intervention in these relations between 'societies.' Cohen and others note that the interests of a privileged few may be enough to generate the concentration and organization of power in a state for these purposes.

In an age of territorial 'nation' states, the tendency is to identify a particular territory with its own nation and state, as though these naturally go together.

Actually, it is curious that this should be so when, as I am writing, the Gulf region and South Asia are convulsed by issues of what territory is in whose state (all of which were formed and their boundaries drawn by Western colonialism). At the same time, two forty-year-old post-war states in Europe are reuniting a single 'nation' in boundaries very different from any previous ones. Post-colonial African 'national' states are still trying to form their 'nations' in the face of tribal and inter'national' disputes. In Central Asia itself, ethnic disputes and rivalries are (re-)erupting to challenge boundaries fixed fifty, a hundred, or two hundred years ago. The identity of state, nation and territory is doubtful even today. They were not identical in the past, least of all in Central Asia.

Let me note, in parenthesis, that I often lament (for instance to students) the limitations and distortions of our vocabulary, which obliges us to speak of 'international' trade and relations. This terminology suggests that the 'national' states came first in time, space and importance, and that only then did they go on to establish 'inter'-national relations among themselves. This is the popular view and widely accepted in political and economic theory. International relations and trade are seen as object of study and attention secondary to our own 'society.' Immanuel Wallerstein and I have long argued that this supposed sequence of events and importance is historically contrary to fact since A.D. 1500. We argue that the world economy and the world system came first in time *and* importance. We submit that the not-so-'national' states arose later to organize political and economic power to cope with this competitive world economy and system. I believe that the historical evidence is overwhelmingly on our side, even if the terminology is not. However, Wallerstein and most others may not wish to follow me in my claim that the same applies equally to several thousand years before A.D. 1500 (cf. our debate in Wallerstein 1990, 1991; Frank 1991b; my analyses in Frank 1990a,b, 1991a; Gills and Frank 1990/91, 1992). Yet I believe that over a very long period, systemic unity preceded and helped form the 'separate' parts and their relations with each other. Central Asia and the relations of its people with each other and with others 'outside' were perhaps the most important cases and the central factor in this systemic unity.

Historically, the identification of state, territory and nation is false. In Central Asia it is easy to see that matters were largely otherwise. State power was organized and reorganized by nomadic peoples on the basis first of tribal allegiance; then of political alliances, rivalries, and conquests; and only lastly on shifting and temporary territorial bases. What, then, was 'the' society, or 'this' society? It seems, though, that sedentary states or those of supposedly sedentary peoples and societies were not very different. The agricultural base was relatively fixed territorially only in a few major alluvial plains—along

the Tigris/Euphrates, Nile, Indus, Yellow rivers—and shifted as the river bed changed. Even in these territories *different* states came and went. Their ethnic, national, cultural, and social base and rulership changed, as did their political centers from one capital to another and their administrative territorial ranges. Nothing was politically fixed. Moreover, the comings and goings of Central Asians contributed importantly to this flux elsewhere.

Throughout Afro-Eurasia, far beyond nomadic Central Asia, state and imperial political power rose, shifted and fell on a catch-as-catch-can basis with only temporary territorial and very little national underpinning. Even 'China' with its millenarian civilization did not exist as such (and may again change). Dynasties with different bases and territories came and went. Over half of the time during the past three or even two thousand years, these dynasties had non-'Chinese' origins, mostly in Manchuria and some in Central Asia. The organization of state and imperial political power, based on neither territory nor nation, was not very different in other places.

Shall we say, then, that state power was organized only or at least primarily to serve 'internal' social needs? The central thesis of Anatoli Khazanov's (1979) *Nomads and the Outside World* is that 'nomads could never exist on their own without the outside world and its non-nomadic societies' and that 'the important phenomenon of nomadism ... consists in its indissoluble and necessary connection with the outside world' (Khazanov 1979:3). The same relationship extends to the formation of the state among the nomads—and perhaps among their sedentary neighbors also. Khazanov (1979 Chapter 5; 1981) links state formation among nomads mostly, but not always, with external expansion at the expense of their sedentary neighbors. He distinguishes between conquest and subjugation of sedentary peoples from whom the nomads exact tribute, and sedentarization of the nomads themselves on their neighbors' territory. In either case, state formation is an important instrument for the nomads. Sometimes also, a nomad state may be formed to derive tribute from a sedentary one to which it offers protection from other nomads.

Thomas Barfield (1989) goes a step further. He criticizes the

> common assumption that the creation of a nomadic state was the result of internal development. Yet historically known nomadic states were organized on a level of complexity far beyond the needs of simple nomadic pastoralism.... The development of the state among nomadic pastoralists, therefore, was not a response to internal needs; rather it developed when they were forced to deal with more highly organized sedentary state societies on a continual basis. Drawing on cases from southwestern Asia, Irons [1979] came to the same conclusion and reduced it to a hypothesis: 'Among pastoral nomadic societies hierarchical political institutions are generated only by external relations with state societies and never develop purely as a result of internal dynamics of such societies.' (Barfield 1989:6–7)

Barfield devotes much of his book to confirming this hypothesis for eastern Central Asia. He extends it by showing that

> Powerful nomadic empires rose and fell in tandem with native dynasties in China. The Han and Hsiung-nu empires appeared within a decade of one another, while the empire of the Turks emerged just as China reunified under the Sui/Tang dynasties. (*ibid.*:9)

> The unification of China under the Ch'in/Han dynasties and the steppe under the Hsiung-nu after centuries of anarchy occurred within a single generation. Three hundred years later, dissolution of central power in both China and the steppe also took place within a generation. It was no accident that the steppe and China tended to be mirror images of one another. Ultimately the state organization of the steppe needed a stable China to exploit. The Turkish empires and the T'ang dynasty provide an unusual opportunity to test this hypothesis. (*ibid.*:131)

Since Barfield's book is mostly about nomadic empires he tries to demonstrate how trade relations with and surplus from China was an essential input into nomadic societies. Acquisition and administration of this surplus-from-outside was necessary to establish and maintain claims to political power for and among the nomadic rulers themselves. That is, much nomadic political power was based on the ability of particular tribal rulers to guarantee the input of surplus derived from their relations with the Chinese. This input was especially essential for the organization and maintenance of imperial alliances and conquests among nomadic tribes themselves. However, Di Cosmo (1990) points out and Barthold (1956; 1962:11–13) seems to confirm that class and intra-nomadic power struggles preceded (and were more bloody than) the nomadic incursions into neighboring sedentary states.

However, this stable relationship with a stable imperial dynastic power in China was so important for the nomad rulers that the Central Asian Uighur state helped the Tang dynasty defend itself against the major An Lu-shan rebellion in 755. (We must return to this important period and its outcome, including the decline of Tang power, in another context below.) Thus, nomadic and Chinese power rose and fell not only in temporal tandem but also in structural symbiosis.

This part of Barfield's analysis suggests at least three important further questions and extensions of research and analysis.

A) How true was this same tandem and symbiosis for the formation and decline of major states elsewhere in Central Asia? Irons (1979) already suggested that the same was true for the formation of Central Asian states in their relations with West Asia. This requires further investigation, also for South Asia. Indeed, the formation and expansion of these states may also have been part of Eurasian-wide economic and political cycles, to which we will return below.

B) What was the mix of 'internal' and 'external' dynamics, needs and possibilities in the ups and downs of the many smaller states in Central Asia? These little states were territorially based on oases and special nodal nexuses and crossroads of interchange with other peoples. We will also return to them below in other contexts. At this point it is enough to observe that these oases and other nodal regions *and states* were vitally dependent on long-distance trade and that they were the object of incessant rivalry among their neighbors. Hence, state power in these localities arose, was organized and disappeared very much as a function of the ups and downs of their relations with their neighbors near and far---and as part of Eurasian political-economic cycles.

C) The most interesting and important further question and possible reinterpretation of the historical evidence is the implication of Barfield's hypothesis of secondary or intersystemic state formation for civilizations and empires 'outside' Central Asia. Was the formation, organization, and decline of states in the outlying areas 'internally' or 'externally' shaped and determined? Central Asian states rose and declined not only in tandem but also in symbiosis with those of the 'highly organized sedentary state societies' (as per Barfield above). Does this mean that political power in these 'more civilized' societies was also organized, at least in part, as a function of their relations with those of Central Asia *and* with each other? The old adage has it that asking the right question is getting more than half of the right answer. It stands to reason that political organization in these sedentary state societies was a function of their 'external' relations as well as of their 'internal' needs. Indeed, many of their 'internal' needs *were* 'external' relations. This internal/external relation was particularly pressing for and on the state. For the state was needed to organize economic, political and of course military relations and rivalry with other 'societies' near and far, whether in Central Asia or not.

To demonstrate the importance of 'external' factors and of relations with Central Asia in the 'internal' organization of states around Afro-Eurasia (and for that matter elsewhere) is beyond our scope and my capacity. However, (re)investigating this 'external' relationship and the role of Central Asia in the formation, continuity and decline of state and other political power elsewhere is a major task of historical research and (re)interpretation. It can begin with the analysis of state formation in the alluvial plains of Mesopotamia, the Indus, and Egypt. The inhabitants there had relations with each other and with the Levant, Anatolia, and with the peoples of Central Asia. Thus, in 2350 B.C., Sargon sent military expeditions into the highlands of Persia and Anatolia to safeguard the supply of metals and other products essential to his people and his own rule over them.

The repeated incursions of Central Asian peoples outward into all directions east, south and west, as well as day-to-day economic and political relations across these 'Inner Asian frontiers,' obliged all outlying sedentary societies to adapt their political organization to the exigencies of these relations with Central Asia. For instance, Soviet authors V.M. Masson and V.I. Sarianidi (1972) conclude their study with a reference to

> the complex process of migration of peoples belonging to the Indo-Iranian language group, in which many of the modern peoples of Western Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, and India had their origin. Thus all the evidence clearly reveals the close and indissoluble links between the history of Western Central Asia and that of its neighbors. Close ties and mutual influence have from the earliest times lighted the difficult road of the progress of mankind. (Masson and Sarianidi 1972:169)

Eberhard (1977) suggests that, at the other end of Central Asia, the Qin were able to build the very first centralized state in China at least in part owing to their control of trade with Central Asia through the Wei and Tao valleys. Of course, the later dynasties in China, too, were at least reformed if not originally formed as a function of the ups and downs of their relations with the peoples of Central Asia.

Excessively Sino-centric perspectives and accounts among the Chinese and others may have obscured this tandem and symbiotic relationship, but it is historical fact nonetheless. Indeed, perhaps it was so important that the Chinese and Sinophiles took great pains to obscure it.

> The traditional interpretation of Sino-barbarian relations ... is thus clearly not a valid one.... The evaluation of the latter, whether done by a Chinese or a Western scholar, has been too Sinocentric. Unquestionably, China enjoyed a higher level of cultural achievement, but it was not isolated from its neighbors. From Han times, there is evidence that China was subjected to outside cultural influences, and these were even stronger during the Sung dynasty, when China was never in a position to force its world view on recalcitrant, powerful neighbors. (Kwanten 1979:104)

7. *Gender Relations*

Were gender relations different in Central Asia from those elsewhere, and if so, how? This question has become important in recent feminist (re)interpretations of history. Since history has been very much written by, of, and for men (to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln), all people should welcome this new feminist historiography and its effort to set the historical record straight. But is it successful? Marija Gimbutas (1980, 1981) and Riane Eisler (1987) in particular attribute patriarchy (in the West) to the incursion of warring nomads from Central Asia:

> As Aryans in India, Hittites and Mittani in the Fertile Crescent, Luwians in Anatolia, Kurgans in eastern Europe, Acheans and later Dorians in Greece, they gradually imposed their ideologies and ways of life on the lands and peoples they conquered. There were other nomadic invaders as well. The most famous of these are the Semitic people we call Hebrews. (Eister 1987:44)

> It is what seems most definitely to unite these peoples of so many different places and times: the structure of their social and ideological systems. *The one thing they all had in common was a dominator model of social organization*: a social system in which male dominance, male violence, and generally hierarchic and authoritarian social structure was the norm. Another commonality was ... not developing technologies of production, but through ever more effective technologies of destruction.... There seems little question that from the very beginning warfare was an essential instrument for replacing the [gender-equal] partnership model with the [patriarchal male] dominator model. (*ibid.*:47; emphasis in original)

The reading of history by Gimbutas and Eisler is open to many doubts if not denials. For instance, Khazanov (1979:90) calls the Kurgan culture, which plays a prominent role in the argument of Gimbutas, only an artificial and speculative construction. There is indeed considerable question whether egalitarian partnership was really the early norm, and warfare absent, in the southern and western Eurasian societies, as Eisler claims. Moreover, with regard to Central Asia there is some question as to whether patriarchy was especially the norm among the invading nomads from Central Asia. James DeMeo (1987; 1990) argues in favor of both cases and even in support of greater egalitarianism in Central Asia itself *before* climatic change supposedly obliged people there to abandon what he calls matrism and to adopt patrism. He says 'these are nearly identical in concept' with those of Eisler (DeMeo 1990:22, note 2). He refers to what he calls Saharasia, a 1000-mile wide belt running from the Sahara through Central Asia to Northeast Asia.

> What of the peoples who inhabited Saharasia during the wetter times of plenty? The evidence is also clear on this point: *These early peoples were peaceful, unarmored, and matrist in character*. Indeed, I have concluded that there does not exist any clear, compelling or unambiguous evidence for the existence of patrism anywhere on Earth significantly prior to c. 4000 B.C. However, strong evidence exists for matrist social conditions. (DeMeo 1990:30; emphasis in original)

> A systematic and global review of such evidence (DeMeo 1985; 1986:ch.6,7) revealed distinct global patterns in these archeological transitions, wherein entire regions were transformed from matrism to patrism within the same general time periods, or where the transition to patrism swept across major portions of a continent, from one end to the other, over a period of centuries. Of major significance was the finding that the earliest of these cultural transformations occurred in specific Old World regions (notably in North Africa, the Near East, and Central Asia, around 4000–3500 B.C.E.), *in concert with major environmental transformations, from relatively wet to arid conditions in these regions*. (*ibid.*:25; emphasis in original)

DeMeo, then, attributes the change from matrism to patrism first to the desertification of previously settled Saharasia and the starvation, nomadization and mass migration produced by this climatic change. Next, patrism was diffused from Central Asia to the outlying regions of still sedentary settlement and civilization.

DeMeo resurrects a sort of Huntingtonian climatic determinism, even of character. He correlates 34 'dichotomous behaviors, attitudes, and social institutions' grouped under rubrics of child rearing, sexuality, women, cultural and family structure (including violence and military structure), and religion, beliefs and attitudes, for hundreds of societies for which archeological, historical and some contemporary data are available. He concludes that patrism is highly correlated with the nomad warrior societies in Central Asia. However, it is also found in those outlying settled societies that received migrations and had to adapt to military and other pressures from Central Asia. Thus, DeMeo goes even further than Gimbutas and Eisler in his claims, which would support a new feminist reinterpretation of history.

I asked every professional Central Asianist I met whether the evidence available to them supports the Eisler and DeMeo theses. Unanimously, they all said that it does not. On the contrary, according to their evidence Central Asian nomad societies accorded women higher status and had more egalitarian gender relations than their sedentary neighbors in Eurasia. I hesitate to cite the people who offered their evidence to me orally, but I can quote some written material. Presumably, these authors were unaware of the controversy I referred to above.

Central Asian nomad societies were certainly patrilineal and patrilocal. Although the status of women was definitely lower than men's, their authority and prestige grew as women aged and assumed economically and socially important roles within the family and society. Hambly (1969) notes relatively free fraternization among men and women and important roles for women in managing nomadic households and sometimes herds. Krader (1966:145) attributes to women a domestic and agricultural empire within a nomadic empire. To be sure, inheritance was a patrilineal corporate family matter. Even so,

> women had more authority and autonomy than their sisters in neighboring sedentary societies. Among political elites polygyny was common, but . . . it was not possible to practice the forms of seclusion so common in many sedentary Asian societies. Day-to-day life required women to take on a more public role in economic activities. Although the details cannot be confirmed for the entire history of Inner Asia, most visitors made comments [to this effect]. (Barfield 1989:25)

> The impact of alien [semi-nomad] rule in [early Tang] north China was illustrated by many debates between southerners from the Yangtse region, which had remained under Chinese rule.... In the north women had much greater freedom. They handled legal affairs, business, and lobbied for themselves at court. A sorry state of affairs that could be attributed to the steppe traditions of the T'o-pa We, according to southern writers—who secluded women. (*ibid.*:140)

> The recovered commercial documents provide tantalizing insights into economic and social practices of the time. Information dating from Mongol times suggests that women in the steppe empires had more rights and independence than their counterparts in sedentary states. These indications are confirmed for the Uighur empire. Women were entitled to own property and were free to manage and dispose of it as they saw fit. They were also entitled to act as guarantors in contracts, and were provided for in testamentary regulations. (Kwanten 1979:58)

The important question of gender relations remains open for others to pursue the evidence more assiduously. Whatever the answer(s), further study of Central Asia can only emerge as central to yet another of our contemporary issues.

8. *Ethnogenesis and Ethnicity*

Another vital concern for which Central Asia is of special relevance is ethnogenesis and ethnic identity, not to mention racial identification. The recurrent major and continuous, less extensive *Völkerwanderungen* in, through, and out of Central Asia have certainly mixed and mixed up ethnicity and race. So how can they be identified today? In the West, 'Caucasians,' 'Aryans' and others speak 'Indo-European' languages. What in Western parlance is now termed the 'Near' or 'Middle' 'East' was another of the world's major crossroads and melting pots for millennia. It is now largely inhabited by 'Semitic' peoples whose origin was also in Central Asia. They later adopted Hebrew, Christian, and Muslim faiths whose essential historical and religious commonality seems increasingly forgotten in their contemporary religiously clothed disputes. Asians from the east, south and southeast all share racial, ethnic and other cultural features with past or present peoples from Central Asia. 'Indigenous' Americans, 'native' to the New World, have 'Mongolian' features and also retain some terminology of Central Asian origin. Are we—and even some Africans—all Central Asians?

At the same time, Central Asians do not recognize themselves or each other as such. Their ethnic identities are much more local. Yet few if any people have been in any particular locality for very long. Nor have they been there alone, since other peoples also passed in and through the same localities. What then is the source of ethnic identity, let alone racial identification, in Central Asia or anywhere else?

Soviet scholars (only some of whose writings have been translated) and others have devoted much effort to ethnogenesis in Central Asia and elsewhere. The work remains incomplete. Whatever the gaps in our knowledge or the disputes about past ethnogenesis and present ethnicity, their fundamentals are clear: ethnogenesis is less traditional than situational, and ethnicity is less of an identity among 'us' than a relation with 'them.' Both the situation and the relation are substantially defined by state and other political power; and the presence, absence, and especially the change in economic welfare occasions changes in the perception of ethnic identity and in the urgency of its expression. Frederick Barth (1969) persuasively argued for the recognition of situational and relational ethnic identity. In more general terms Nathan Glazer and Daniel Moynihan make the same point in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (1975). Summarizing in the words of Roger Ballard's (1976) review of the latter: 'ethnicity is then, a political phenomenon, in which material interest unites with moral and emotional bonds.'

Most of the existing ethnicities and their denominations in Central Asia and elsewhere are of recent origin—and continue to alter in response to changing circumstances. The names of some ethnicities, like Uighur or Tadzhiks, may be very old; but often the same name has been used by very different peoples, who had little or no genetic or social connection between them. Dru Gladney (1990) shows how the present-day majority ethnicity in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China only became so quite recently. Moreover, the Uighur name was adopted; historically it had been used before by quite different people. Similarly, Krader (1966) argues that in some sense the Soviet Tadzhiks may have three millennia of continuous residence in Central Asia. However, they were composed of a dozen different peoples, including Indians, Turks, and Arabs. Indeed, according to Barthold, the very Tadzhik name originally meant 'Arab,' as first the Persians, and then the Turks and Chinese called them. Among the many Turkic-speaking peoples, according to Krader, only the Turkmens can be traced back before the Mongol invasions.

Ethnic conflict in Central Asia and elsewhere breaks out either to oust or to gain political power. Ethnic conflict can arise between different and even among the same peoples. The situation promises to become more and more acute and threatens to engulf the fortunes and misfortunes of others near and far. Indeed today, most ethnic identity and change seems to be mobilized by changing economic fortunes and misfortunes. The resulting ethnic strife poses a serious threat. However, it also offers an opportunity to defuse it through more timely attention to processes of ethnic identification in Central Asia and elsewhere. Krader (1966) sees a continuous long-term development of common identity among Turkic peoples in Central Asia, and Daniel Pipes (*International Herald Tribune*, 14 February 1990) foresees a large-scale Turkish

nationalist revival across all of Central Asia. (Ever since Ataturk, Turkey itself seems to prefer becoming the last wagon on the European train. But if Europe now closes off that option, perhaps Turkey will opt for becoming the locomotive on a Pan-Turkish-Asian train instead.) Ethnicity cannot be separated from political and economic relations, not at the level of the 'nation-state' nor inter-'nationally.'

9. *Religion*

Why have Central Asians been so hospitable to so many religions brought from elsewhere without, however, developing any major religion of their own? Sinor (1977:101) claims that several mythological themes in China and Greece originated in Central Asia. Why were some and not other major religions welcomed and transmitted through Central Asia? Why did some religions succeed others where and when they did, but not elsewhere or at other times? Why have some religions, but not others, survived to this day, and what are their future prospects?

Frederick Teggart (1939) noted and asked

> I may point to the great religious movements associated with the names of Zoroaster in Persia, Lao-tzu and Confucius in China, Mahavira (founder of Jainism) and Guatama Buddha in India, the prophets Ezekiel and Second Isaiah, Thales in Ionia, and Pythagoras in southern Italy. All these great personages belong to the sixth century B.C., and their appearance certainly constituted a class of events. Yet, though the correspondence of these events has frequently been observed, no serious effort has ever been made, so far as I have been able to discover, to treat these apparently great teachers—within a brief compass of time—as a problem which called for systematic investigation. But without this knowledge how are we to envisage or comprehend the workings of the human spirit? (Teggart 1939:xi–xii)

Half a century later the same tasks and questions still remain. Twenty-five years ago, McNeill (1963:338) noted important resemblances among some of these and later religions that might be attributable to mutual borrowings.

> But parallel invention should not be ruled out, for, if social and psychological circumstances of the submerged people and urban lower classes were in fact approximately similar in all parts of Western Asia, we should expect to find close parallels among the religious movements which arose and flourished in such milieux. This is in fact the case. (McNeill 1963:338)

McNeill went on to distinguish three common features among Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity: eternal life in a blissful afterworld, participation of women, and a savior God. Whatever these and other religions' common features and possible functions, some of them did and others did not spread

to and through Central Asia. Manicheaism, Nestorian Christianity, and Buddhism spread. Why and how did they successively replace each other? Hinduism, Confucianism, and Judaism were brought by travellers, merchants, and even conquerors of these persuasions. But they did not find fertile ground in and were not transmitted through Central Asia. Why not? We may posit the suggestion that this failure may be traced to the failure of any hegemonic power to impose its domination—and to legitimize it through the imposition of its own state religion—in or over Central Asia for any long period of time. Buddhism did not spread through Central Asia until some 500 to 700 years after its birth, when the Kushan and later the Gupta empires rose to dominance. However, perhaps their power was too ephemeral to implant Buddhism as an imperial religion. Other religions, like Zoroasterism and even lesser known ones, did not even leave any traces. (Zoroaster may have been born in Bactrian Central Asia, but even the temporary spread of his teachings seems to have required Persian power.) Hellenistic culture made important incursions in Central Asia, both directly and indirectly via West and South Asia. So why did no Greek religion make its way through Central Asia? Perhaps because no Greek power did after the failure of Alexander. Of course, some religions also 'made it' only some of the time, among some peoples and regions, and not among others. How so?

On the other hand, in an unpublished Spanish manuscript on world history, Enrique Dussel (1966) proposes an interpretation which distinguishes between the Weltanschauung of all 'Indo-European' religions and the 'Semitic' one of Judeo-Christian and Islamic religions. The former, emerged in and around Central Asia, were dominant throughout Eurasia for millennia, formed the spiritual basis of ancient Greece and Rome, and still survived in Asia thereafter. The Semitic Weltanschauung and religions began among very marginal and largely nomadic peoples in the Middle East. However, they spread and eventually displaced the Indo-European Weltanschauung even in large areas of its origin and, of course, in the West through Christianity, and elsewhere through Islam, until the Christian West itself expanded.

Beginning in the seventh and eighth centuries, Islam spread like wildfire through much of Central Asia. Sometimes, people became Muslims because their old or new rulers adopted Islam for their own convenience. Often, Islam was received by popular acclaim. Rarely was it imposed by the sword, as some legend incorrectly has it. No doubt very oversimplistically, I suggest an analogy of the spread of Islam then with that of 'Reaganomics' of the 1980s: Islam offered and was welcomed as 'getting the (old) government off the people's backs' and 'letting the magic of the market enrich people' or at least some of them. It must have appealed to and been supported by merchants in particular, whose hands had been tied by previous political

restrictions. Moreover, the Islamic jihad offered to legitimize some states' conquests of their neighbors. Conversion to Islam also offered protection from enslavement; since Muslims did not enslave other Muslims, or Jews and Christians either.

However, the Muslims never penetrated China and did not even reach the eastern end of the Tarim basin until the sixteenth century, long after the Mongols had left. When Islam did arrive there, it served the local needs of the moment. Yet, Mongolia and Tibet remained Buddhist, which China did not. Some possible socio-political explanations were inconclusively debated on our Silk Roads Expedition (cf. Kim 1990S). Soviet and Chinese Central Asia has remained Muslim, and Tibet Buddhist, to this day. In the face of growing unemployment, environmental degradation, and the sense of foreign oppression and exploitation, these religions—along with ethnicity—offer yet another important rallying cry for their peoples in the near future.

10. *Nexuses*

Central Asian Bactria was long known as 'paradise on Earth,' 'the land of a thousand cities' and its capital Bactra as 'the mother of cities.' Toynbee (1961: 2, quoted in Holt 1988:31) wrote of Bactria as a place where 'routes converge from all quarters of the compass and from which routes radiate out to all quarters of the compass again.' These routes connected China, India, Iran, the Mediterranean, and of course other parts of Central Asia itself. For centuries before the Greek Alexander arrived, Bactria was an important nexus, and that is why Alexander went and married there. What were the other important commercial and political nexuses and racial/ethnic and religious melting pots in Central Asia, or between it and neighboring regions? What were special crossroads of trade and migration and/or foci of political and military rivalry and attention? Gills and Frank (1990/91) suggested the following:

> Three magnets of attraction for political-economic expansion stand out. One is sources of human (labor) and/or material inputs (land, water, raw materials, precious metal, etc.) and technological inputs into the process of accumulation. The second is markets to dispose of one zone's surplus production to exchange for more inputs, and to capture stored value. The third, and perhaps most significant, are the most privileged nexuses or logistical corridors of inter-zonal trade.
>
> Certain strategically placed regions and corridors have played such especially important roles in world system development. They have been magnets which attracted the attention of hegemonial powers and also of migrants and invaders. Major currents of thought also migrated through them. (Gills and Frank 1990/91:24)

In Western Asia three nexus corridors have played a key role in interlinkage and logistics. These are:

1. The Nile–Red Sea corridor (with canal or overland connections between them and to the Mediterranean Sea, and open access to the Indian Ocean and beyond).
2. The Syria–Mesopotamia–Persian Gulf corridor (with overland routes linking the Mediterranean coast through Syria, on via the Orontes, Euphrates and Tigris rivers, to the Persian Gulf, which gives open access to the Indian Ocean and beyond). This nexus also offered connections to overland routes to Central Asia.
3. The Aegean–Black Sea–Central Asia corridor (connecting the Mediterranean via the Dardanelles and Bosporus to the overland 'Silk Roads' to and from Central Asia, from where connecting routes extended overland to India and China). (Gills and Frank 1990/91:24)

Lombard (1975:219) identifies related trade routes and three centers of particular importance: Merv, Herat, Balkh and especially Nishapur on the fork of the road between Baghdad and India; Khwarzim in the Oxus delta on the Aral Sea, which was pivotal for both the east-west and north-south trade; and the oases of Ma wara' an-Nahr on the east-west route to China.

At the 'Inner-Asian Frontiers of China' a similar role was perhaps played on the silk road and the routes of migration and invasion by the Kansu (Haxi) corridor, the Tarim Basin oases, Kashgar and the passes to the southwest across the Pamirs and to the northwest across the western end of the Tien Shan mountains (Xu 1990S). These passes led to Taxila in Kashmir and to Samarkand and Bukhara in Sogdian Transoxania (meaning across the Oxus river from Persia and the Caucasus), where the silk roads connected with the West.

Several other nexuses were mentioned at the Urumqi seminar. Duojie Caidan (1990S) referred to four international trade routes which passed through the Tupo Kingdom between China, Tibet and India. Thomas Höllman evoked the area where the Hunza, Gilgit, and Insua rivers meet. The Iron Gate and other passes through the eastern Tien Shan mountains were bottlenecks of military conflict or invasion between China and the steppes, as well as connections with the east-west and north-south trade routes, north of the Tien Shan range.

All these and other nexuses deserve special attention, and of course additional archeological digs. Their privileged locations can reveal much about migratory, economic, political, military, social, and cultural currents in and through Central Asia and its neighboring regions. They are likely to have been especially active melting pots—not only as important points of transit. Because of their trade and other economic and/or strategic importance, these nexuses also were bones of special contention for economic, political and military control. For this reason it is likely that control and even the

population shifted more frequently than in other areas in Central As
of these crossroads and other nexuses may also offer special opportu
study. They could reveal the extent to which social institutions, cul
religion in these localities were changed by new rulers or were inste
with or adapted to already previously prevalent ones. All these po
underscore the need to identify and privilege these nexuses in rese
analysis.

11. *Production and Trade*

What place and role did production and trade in and through Cen
have in the world economy or the Afro-Eurasian economic *system*?
nately, it remains the case, as Luc Kwanten rightly observed, that

> whenever the history of nomadic societies is examined, the social science
> larly economics, are rarely taken into consideration, even though the mate
> directly and indirectly to economic affairs. (Kwanten 1979:286)

Even more lamentably, this lacuna is the greater when it comes to e
the place and role of the nomadic and other societies of Central As
political-economic development of Eurasia as a whole. The geogra
and perhaps structural and functional—Central Asian center of this
a dark and black hole indeed. The little light we can shed on this matte
perhaps distinguish between local production and trade, exchange
adjoining regions and/or interdependent sectors like nomad pastora
settled agriculture, and long-distance trade through Central Asia.

Several Central Asian regions, especially in what Khazanov calls
Asia,' long had highly developed agriculture, mining, manufacturin
course commerce, which supported large and very civilized urban set

> Archeological surveys in Central Asia are at last setting straight the r
> Exceeding all earlier expectations, the spade has uncovered ample evide
> early development of irrigation, commerce, and fortified cities in ancie
> Asia. Excavations at Mundigak, Deh Morasi Ghundai, Shar-i-Sokhta, Ba
> tepe, Kizil-tepe, Talichkhan-tepe, Altin-tepe and numerous other sites ha
> the evolution of Bactrian urbanization from the time of the Bronze Age. (
> 27)

For instance, Soviet excavations at Namazga-tepe and Altin-tepe
ern Turkmenia reveal bronze-age urban and proto-urban developme
2000 B.C. Timber-grave Srubnaya and Andronovo sites in western T
reveal high cultural developments. There is evidence of trade links fr
of these settlements with Iran and Mesopotamia to the southwest,

Harappan civilization with its capital of Mohenjo-daro on the Indus to the southeast, and to Bukhara and Ferghana to the east.

> It seems likely that trade was the motivating force behind connections between India and Central Asia, which became much more marked in the Middle Bronze Age.... We see then that the settled, agricultural communities of southern Turkmenia in the middle Bronze Age comprised societies with a complex and highly developed economic structure, with crafts as a special sphere of production on the one hand, and agriculture on the other, the very existence of this division suggesting an internal exchange system growing into trade as an essential link in the economic system as a whole. (Masson and Sarianidi 1972:124, 128)

Eventually this Central Asian civilization declined, as did its neighbors in the Mesopotamian and Indus valleys. Developmental ups and downs also characterized other parts of the long chain of irrigated agricultural, oasis, and urban settlements—and the trade routes that linked them—stretching from the Caspian Sea to Lop Nor on the eastern end of the Tarim Basin. Especially noteworthy among them were the Tarim Basin oases in and around the Taklamakan Desert, Samarkand, Bukhara, Ferghana and its 'heavenly horses,' Herat, Merv, and Bactria, the last of which we will return to below.

The age-old relations of these agricultural and urban settlements in Central Asia and also in East and West Asia with the nomad herdsmen in between have been the subject of much debate. The trade and political relations between nomads and settlers across the 'Inner Asian Frontiers of China' were prominent in Owen Lattimore's (1940/1962) classic. Lattimore and many observers since, agree that war was an extension of trade between nomads and settlers, to adapt Clausewitz's famous dictum. There is less agreement about when and why trade/war was initiated and how the costs and benefits were shared among the participants. Most Chinese spokesmen maintained that 'China' was self-sufficient and traded with the nomads only at their behest. The nomads were 'greedy' or 'needy' as Nicola Di Cosmo (1990) terms these theories of nomad-settler relations, with which most foreign observers have agreed. Therefore, Lattimore and Di Cosmo also argued that the periodic wars were either due to nomad invasions to despoil China of her riches, or they were threats of more to come in order to have China agree to a sort of 'protection' through trade. To save face, the Chinese also argued that the nomad 'barbarians' were paying 'tribute.' Others, and especially Di Cosmo (1990) argue that Chinese frontier society was little more self-sufficient than their nomad neighbors, and that the initiative for the recurrent wars never came from the nomads. Moreover, the nomads also drew on the desert oases for agricultural and handicraft supplies.

What is established is that the nomads' main export was horses raised on their steppe grasslands. The Chinese had an insatiable demand for horses they could not raise themselves, especially for military purposes including defense

against the nomads themselves. The Chinese in turn exported silk and other luxuries, but also grain, coarse textiles, arms and tea. Sinor (1977:175) cites Morris Rossabi to the effect that for the Chinese, tea and horses were so inextricably related as to be administered by the same authority. The price of horses in silk and/or cash fluctuated with supply and demand, which in turn varied according to changing economic and political/military circumstances.

Khazanov pursues his thesis of the nomads' 'indissoluble and necessary connection with the outside world' (1979:3) and examines a 'wide spectrum of turbulent interrelations between nomads and the sedentary world' (1979 222):

> The spectrum of these relations varies from irregular raids on and robbery of agriculturalists and townsmen to the imposition on them of more or less long-term relations of protection and dependence. The benefits from such non-economic relations for nomads are so evident that they need not be examined in detail here. Nomads are in a position [due to their military superiority and mobility] in which they are able to acquire agricultural products and handicraft goods they need (and also livestock) by force, or by threatening such, while giving little or nothing in exchange.... In the long term it was more beneficial and safer for nomads to insist the sedentary population paid them protection and defense against other groups of nomads, and just to be left in peace. On the local level such relations were more widespread in the Near East and partly also in the Middle East. They were considerably less common in the Eurasian steppes. (Khazanov 1979:222, 223)

Khazanov (1979:224–27) distinguishes (1) direct, irregular and uncontrolled pillage, (2) tribute, (3) direct taxation, (4) the nomads' own creation of agricultural and handicraft sectors, and (5) seizure of land and exaction of rent from or exploitation of peasants who are turned into tenants. Another dimension, mentioned by Barfield (1989:239) with regard to a particular case, may have had more general applicability: the nomadic leadership elite may have been served more by trade that provided luxury goods, and the commoners by raids that yielded more grain, metals, manufactures, and livestock. Trade and perhaps raids did support greater differentiation and inequality within nomad society, and possibly within settled frontier society also. Thus, Central Asian peoples and their neighbors were dependent on this division and exchange of labor and its products with each other, however much some of them may have sought to deny or denigrate this interdependence.

There was long-distance trade as well, mostly through a chain of shorter relays along the silk road(s) from one end of Eurasia to the other. Central Asian intermediaries along the way took their cut and sought to protect their interests in this transcontinental trade. Recently there have been many nostalgic references to the 'silk road' (whose name was coined in the nineteenth century by the German Baron Ferdinand von Richthoven). UNESCO organized an 'Integral Study of the Silk Roads: Roads of Dialogue.' I took part in its First

Desert Route Expedition. It covered 5000 kilometers overland along the eastern end of the silk road from Xian to Kashgar, and nearly 10,000 kilometers with almost daily side trips. The Urumqi seminar, at which I presented an early version of this paper, was an adjunct to this expedition. Scholars from many countries and disciplines participated in both the expedition and the seminar. Yet trade along the silk road received no attention on our expedition and was given only very short shrift at the closing seminar. There was little or no consideration of the economy in our or some other part of Central Asia. The place of the economy in connecting the outlying Afro-Eurasian areas, let alone their role in the operation of the entire continental economic system, went unmentioned, except in my own uninformed and brief interventions. I expressed hope that these and other important questions would receive more attention in the expeditions, planned by UNESCO to cover the steppe and maritime routes.

The 'silk' road could equally well be called the road of jade (indeed, it probably began that way, as jade was imported into China from Central Asia). Or the road could be called one of gold, silver; other metals, wood, wool, clay and their manufactures; spices, grains, and other foodstuffs; and especially horses, other livestock, human slaves and a host of other items produced and traded through an organized division and exchange of labor in and through Central Asia and its neighboring regions.

Given the scope of this essay I restrict myself to a selection of general questions about these economic relations. In some cases, I will add elements of answers suggested in other papers presented at the Urumqi seminar (I will identify these as 1990S).

When was the silk road and, hence, effective east-west and north-south long-distance trade across Asia opened up? The Chinese traditionally date this opening in 105 or 115 B.C., or with Zhan Qian's mission to the West in the second century after Christ. However, Irene Franck and David Brownstone begin their *The Silk Road. A History* (1986:1) by saying that 'the silk road is actually far older than this, perhaps by 2000 years or more. It was, for at least 4000 years, the main avenue of communication between the Mediterranean and China.' Lin Zhichun (1990S) cites evidence of Chinese trade and migratory contacts with Siberia and with western Central Asia already 500, 1500 and even 5000 years before Christ. Wang Binghua (1990S) argues that archeological finds in China indicate 'ancient traffic routes ... [whose] scale of connections is not weak ... as early as the Yinshang Dynasty of the twelfth century [B.C.].' A. Askarov (1990S) found Chinese silk dating from 1500 B.C. in several Bactrian excavations and especially from Sapalle in what is now southern Uzbekistan. Similar vases dating from around 1,200 B.C. excavated there and in parts of China make it 'now possible to say that already during

the period of the Western Zhou and Zhou Yuan, trade contacts exist
tween the civilization of Shanxi province and those of Ancient Bactriu
Sogdiana.' Perhaps it is revealing that the name of the early Shang Dyn
China meant 'merchant.'

Persia was near the other end of the silk road and along the conn
Persian north-south 'royal road' and the 'spice road' into Arabia. Abo
B.C., the Achaemenid King Darius of Persia had the following inscribed
palace:

> This is the palace which I built at Susa. From afar its ornamentation was brou
> The cedar timber ... from a mountain named [Lebanon]. ... The Assyrian
> brought it to Babylon; from Babylon the Carians and the Ionians brought it t
> The yaku timber was brought from Gandara and from Carmania. The g
> brought from Sardis and from Bactria, which here was wrought. The precio
> lazuli and carnelian, which was wrought here, was brought from Sogdian
> precious stone turquoise was brought from Chorasmia, which was wrough
> The silver and the ebony were brought from Egypt. The ornamentation wit
> the wall was adorned was brought from Ionia. The ivory, which was wrough
> was brought from Ethiopia, and from Sind and from Arachosia. The stone pc
> which here were wrought, were brought from Elam. The stone-cutters who w
> the stone were Ionians and Sardians. The goldsmiths who wrought the go
> Medes and Egyptians. The men who wrought the baked bricks were Babyl
> The men who adorned the wall were Medes and Egyptians. (quoted in Fra
> Brownstone 1986:65–66)

Even as the crow flies, the sources Darius mentions were several tho
miles distant. However, as Darius did not tire reiterating, this long-di
trade supported local industry as well as, of course, himself. Moreover, t
evidence of earlier and farther-reaching organized trans-Asian trade. H
tus' references to the Scythians and modern archeological finds sugges
through Central Asia of gold from Siberia and silk from China. In th
century B.C., the Mauryan empire in India maintained the 'Grand Roa
Bactria, through the Kabul River Valley and the Khyber Pass into the
to the Bay of Bengal 2,600 miles distant. The state maintained the infr
ture of roads, signposts, guardhouses, water wells, causeways, ferries, et
shelters were provided for traders and other travelers.

The *Hou Han Shu* Official History of the Chinese Han Dynasty, in its
ters 61 and 96A on the western regions (Hulsewe and Lowe 1979), r
numerous Chinese contacts with lands and their points of political an
mercial interest across Asia. Each is introduced with the size of its pop
and the number of men it can put under arms, and its distance in thous
li from the Chinese capital Loyang. However, even where and when
such official, written testimony by contemporaries, or archeological evi
we may suppose that trade was still older and more widespread than re

Thus, for instance, Han China's envoy Chang Ch'ien wrote about his travels in the second century:

> When I was in Bactria, I saw there a stick of bamboo ... and some cloth from [Chinese] Szechuan. When I asked the inhabitants how they obtained possession of these they replied 'the inhabitants of our country buy them in India.' (cited in Franck and Brownstone 1986:96)

That is, trade relations preceded and exceeded diplomatic ones.

How were trade relations maintained between Han China and Imperial Rome, and how significant were they to them and their intermediaries? Some archeological evidence remains. Odani (1990S) refers to bilingual coins with Chinese on one side and Kharosthi on the other. Kushan gold coins were of the same about 8-gram weight as Roman Aureus ones and 'might be exchangeable with each other. If I may be allowed a little exaggeration, an international currency system from Rome to China came into existence in the ancient world.' Classical observers like Pliny, and several historians of our time like Hudson (1931), Teggart (1939), Wheeler (1954) and Yu (1967) have commented on Rome's import of silk and export of bullion. They noted the deleterious effect on Rome of its resulting negative balance of trade and payments with the East. Teggart also quotes Cicero to the effect that 'the credit of the Roman money market is intimately bound up with the prosperity of Asia; a disaster cannot occur there without shaking our credit to its foundations' (1939:74, note 20).

China, too, may have depleted its bullion. Gold seems to have traveled predominantly eastward and silver westward, because of differential gold/silver ratios. There is general agreement that both ends of the road dealt with Kushan India and especially with and through Parthian Persia. Indeed, certain merchants only traveled back and forth part of the way. The same goods were bought and sold many times along the way. The middlemen, mostly professional merchants from urban regions, seem to have derived the greatest benefit from this trade, and they sought to defend their monopoly position on the route(s). Palmyra and its more than half a million population lived entirely from this trade, and Antioch, Petra, Sydon and other cities in the Levant substantially so. Barthold argues that the greatest advantage from this trade was derived by the Persians, first under the Parthians and then under the Sasanids:

> By every means at their disposal [they] impeded the communications between China and the Roman Empire, in order to retain the profitable role of commercial intermediaries. Under the Sasanids, the Persians held the most important sea and land routes of world commerce. The influence of Sasanian Persia, as well as of China and India, and the remnants of Graeco-Bactrian culture helped to raise the cultural level of the Central Asian Iranians, especially the Sogdians. (Barthold 1956:6)

Both then and later, political alliances and rivalries as well as military operations often had competition over trade and trade routes as their background, if not their very cause. We will return to this matter below.

Was the long post-'classical' and 'medieval' period one of 'feudal' isolation? Or, on the contrary, did pan Afro-Eurasian trade and other contacts flourish, especially in and through Central Asia?

For the early period, McNeill believes that the Gupta state in India

> appears to have played the leading role in the entire Eurasian world between A.D. 200 and 600.... Military conquests played almost no part: merchants and missionaries took the place of the armies of Macedon and Rome. Consequently, Indian expansion followed trade routes, particularly the sea route to southeast Asia and the islands of Indonesia, and the overland trail through the oases of central Asia to northwest China. (McNeill 1963:362, 367)

The eastward migration of Buddhist religion and art, begun in Kushan times, continued along the silk road. It left its mark in the 'Thousand Buddha caves' that our expedition visited in Xinjiang or Eastern Turkestan. However, Gupta power and influence waned, and Turkic trade and power increased (also at Gupta expense?).

During the sixth century, much of Asia, from Manchuria to the Aral Sea, was dominated by the Eastern and Western Turkic empires.

> Trade played an important role in the Turkic empire. Through their victory over the Juan-juan, the Turks had gained control over Central Asian trade routes, and hence over the lucrative silk trade between China and Byzantium. The Turks had no intention of either abandoning the trade or sharing it with other intermediaries.... Inevitably, this led to war between the Turks and the Sassanian empire [the Persian intermediaries]. In order to create a viable monopoly, the Turks needed to be certain that the Byzantine empire was willing to purchase silk directly from the Turks rather than via established routes. (Kwanten 1979:39)

The Turks first sent a Sogdian emissary to the Sassanians; and when these rejected his proposals, they sent him on to Constantinople. The Byzantines, for their part, had no love lost for the Persians and had already made overtures for direct contact with China. Thus Byzantine Emperor Justin II concluded an anti-Persian alliance with the Turk Istämi (cf. also Grousset 1970:83). The silk trade across Central Asia was the common denominator. Moreover,

> the western domains of the Turkic empire had the principal role in the sale of the silk while the eastern domains acquired it from China. Hence the requirements of the western domains had important repercussions in the eastern domains, in particular on Sino-Turkic relations....
> Because of the importance of trade to the Turkic empire, it is imperative to examine the relationship between war and trade in Turkic politics. It then quickly becomes clear that the principal reason for the numerous wars the Turks launched, on both

the eastern and western frontiers, but especially on the former, were economic ones. (Kwanten 1979:39–40)

Similarly, Beckwith (1987) summarizes that the Turks

> impinged on the borders of all of the great Old World civilizations, including the Central Asian city-states and India. The Turks made it their first order of business to inform their neighbors to the east and west that they were vitally interested in trade. When the Turks annexed most of the Central Asian city-states—great centers for the east-west and north-south caravan trade—in the second half of the sixth century, they also removed the political obstacles to relatively high-volume transcontinental trade.... The Turks' great interest in commerce did not mean that they dominated it; they were its patrons. Most of the international trade during the Early Middle Ages was in the hands of others.... Trade was almost totally monopolized by two or three great trading peoples: the Jews, the Norsemen, and the Sogdians. The profits from this trade in silk, spices, perfumes, war materiel, horses, and other products stimulated not only imperialism, but also local industry and local trade. (Beckwith 1987:178–80)

Among the 'other products' an important place came to be occupied by gold, silver and slaves, particularly during the later Islamic caliphate. Shipments of bullion and coins greased the way for trade, including the very important slave trade. Lombard (1975:194–203) mentions three main sources for slaves: Africa, *Slavic* Central and Eastern Europe (although Western Europe was also a source, and Radhanite Jewish and Frankish merchants used the Mediterranean and Black Seas for transshipment), and Turkestan. Turkish wars, even if they were fought for other reasons, also generated captives and a supply of slaves. Georgia became a well-known source of slaves. However, Kim Ho Dong (personal communication) suspects that captives on the 'inner Asian frontier' of China were not used in Eastern Central Asia; they were transshipped westward. Lombard (1975:195) regards the slave trade as of 'utmost importance.' Albeit referring to its western end, Howard Adelson (1962:47) suggests that the slave trade may well have been *the* most important part of medieval international commerce.

Byzantine Constantinople had little hinterland of its own and lived for many centuries from this commerce, of course including that with Central Asia. The city thrived on its location on the east-west crossroads between Asia and Europe and the north-south ones between the Baltic, the Mediterranean, Western Asia and North Africa. One of Constantinople's functions was to funnel African gold from Nubia and the Sudan to Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia and 'to the trading centers of central Asia—Samarkand, Bukhara, Khwarizm—which commanded the route to the Russian rivers, the country of the Turks, China, and India' (Lombard 1975:114). However, gold was also produced in the mountains of the Caucasus, the Urals, the Altai, Tibet, and in Turkestan. The

more commonly used silver often came in combination with lead in th
casus, northern Persia, and parts of Central Asia, especially in Afghanis
well as from the traditional silver mines in Spain.

The Turkish empire(s) did not last long. In the seventh and eight
turies they gave way to the Tang Dynasty expanding westward from
the Tibetan empire expanding northwards, the Muslims overrunning Ir
Persia and expanding eastward, the Byzantines still holding their ow
the Frankish empire rising in Western Europe. The Islamic caliphate a
'world' economy around it, so masterfully analyzed among others by H
(1974) and Lombard (1975), was probably the driving force, its driver's
Baghdad. Hodgson comments:

> It can be surmised that the commercial life of the lands of Muslim rule was
> positive impetus by the great activity in China, especially considering its in
> connections with China both via the Southern Seas and overland through
> Eurasia. (Hodgson 1974:I,233)

Beyond that, as Beckwith notes,

> the evidence shows that, during the Early Middle Ages, the Tibetan Em
> Frankish Western Europe were integral parts of a civilized world which i
> the Islamic caliphate and T'ang China and was 'focused' (to adapt Pirenne'
> on Central Eurasia.... The importance of the international trade routes
> Central Eurasia cannot be overemphasized. All of the great early medieval
> bordered on and had intimate political and military involvement in that vas
> and the newer powers, the Frankish, Arab, and Tibetan empires expanded d
> it. (Beckwith 1987:196,193)

12. *World System Wide International Political Economic Relations*

What role, then, did Central Asia play in Eurasian-wide inter-'nationa
ical economic and military relations? How did the world system work
its 'missing' link in Central Asia? Grousset writes that his

> aim here is to show the colossal impact of the first Hunnic thrust on the
> of Asia ... [that] started a sequence of repercussions which were felt as fa
> Western Asia and India. Afghanistan was lost to Hellenism.... The same
> continues throughout history which is our present study. The slightest impu
> end of the steppe inevitably sets in motion a chain of quite unexpected conse
> in all four corners of this immense zone of migrations. (Grousset 1970:32)

As noted earlier, throughout millennia of history this chain of links tra
repercussions beyond the four corners of Central Asia itself and
outlying civilizations and empires. Moreover, the links in the cha
forged not only by migrations. As Grousset goes on to demonstr
and again, the links also included widespread cultural, political and e

events, processes and diffusions which included areas in Central Asia along with others. Grousset himself however is among those who 'give little consideration to economic affairs' as Kwanten observed. Accordingly, he also fails to take into account the impulse and far-reaching consequences of local and international political-economic relations.

An interesting instance are the existing political-economic relations whose importance attracted Alexander the Great to invade Egypt, establish a capital in Babylon, conquer Persia, and advance into Bactria and India. Barry Gills (1990) suggests that Alexander the Great married Roxane in Bactria as part of his project to unite a vast commercial and political key area of long standing under the political rule of a Johnny-come-lately outsider. Arrian, the chronicler of Alexander, remarked that the latter 'did not think it derogatory to his dignity to marry her' (quoted in Franck and Brownstone 1986:77). As Frank Holt remarks:

> Bactria was already known as a worthy prize by the late fourth century B.C. Material finds prove that this much, at least, was so: it was an ancient region of cities and a hub of trade no matter what people were responsible for the 'miracle'.... Archeology leaves no question about the advanced state of Bactria's cultural and commercial development during the centuries preceding Alexander's invasion.... On the basis of this evidence, it is clear that Bactria occupied a prominent place in the empire of the Achaemenid kings, and was perhaps the key satrapy on the eastern frontier. Cyrus' conquest and Darius' consolidation under his own family gave this region a notable place in the political history of the Persian empire, while Zoroaster's legendary activities there were of added religious significance. (Holt 1988:37,32,42)

> Plutarch's 'Alexander miracle' [which ascribed Bactria's florescence to Alexander's arrival] must clearly be rejected as no more than a return to Bactria's ancient prosperity once the region had recovered from the turmoil of Persia's collapse. Do we then look back to the Achaemenid kings for a 'Persian miracle' in Bactria? This is quite possible, although ... there is growing consensus that Bactria experienced a specifically 'Bactrian miracle'—a local, independent evolution into a powerful and prosperous state pre-dating the arrival of imperialist forces from Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean. (Holt 1988:32)

Alexander was attracted by the area's extant structure and dynamic of economic relations among Central, South and West Asia, North Africa and Southern Europe. Alexander's untimely death spelled the failure of his project and the subsequent (re)regionalization and separation of these areas, until the Romans again tried something similar on a much more modest scale.

Frederick Teggart examined international political economic linkages through Central Asia for the Roman period.

> It follows, therefore, that knowledge which is indispensable for an historical account of Roman affairs ... can be obtained in no other way than by the comparison of events throughout Eurasia. Thus, apart from any wider interest, the comparison of histories is necessary for a comprehension of what has actually happened within borders of any national state. (1939:243)

Thus Teggart notes that

> when war occurred on the routes in the Tarim Basis, disturbances broke ou Parthia and either in Armenia or on the border of Syria. Evidently then, war in Tarim occasioned an interruption of traffic on the silk route, and this interrupt aroused hostilities at points along the route as far west as the Euphrates. It see highly probable, for example, that the invasions of Armenia by the Parthians, w Armenia was controlled by Rome, were inspired by the suspicion that the Rom had succeeded in diverting the movement of commodities from Central Asia to so route which avoided Parthian territory. But these secondary and derivative w that is, the conflicts between Parthia and Rome for control of Armenia, brou about new interruptions of trade and thus led to new wars in more and more dist areas. So interruptions of traffic on the Black Sea stirred up peoples north of (lower) Danube, and the long train of disturbances ended finally in collisions of barbarians with the Roman legions on the Rhine. Consequently it is to be seen t peoples in no way concerned with the silk route might yet be connected with interruptions of trade on that route through the hostilities which the interruptic precipitated between Parthia and Rome. (1939:240–41)

Teggart correlates and compares the timing of wars and barbarian invasions Rome and China to demonstrate that for the period 58 B.C. to A.D. 107 alo

> even in briefest summary it must be pointed out that, of the wars in the Roman Em eighteen followed wars in Chinese Turkestan, so that of the forty occasions on wh outbreaks took place in Europe, twenty-seven were traceable to the policy or rat changes of policy, of the Han government [in China]. (1939:viii)

The conclusion is that

> the effects of wars which arose out of interruptions of the great 'silk route' throu Persia are plainly visible in the internal history of Rome.... Seemingly there cou be no better illustration of interdependence of nations than the consideration th a decision of the Chinese government should have been responsible for a financi panic in the capital of the Roman empire.... (Teggart 1939:x)

However, even Teggart seems to have considered wars and other politic disturbances as the *cause* of interruptions of trade rather than the other w around. Yet, it may also be argued with equal or more reason that ma uprisings, wars, alliances and other political developments were themselv stimulated if not caused by changing local, regional, or even system-wi economic conditions and interests. We may note here and reconsider t implications below that *the rise and then again the decline* of Han China (*a* their Central Asian Hsiun-nu neighbors), Kushan India, Parthian Persia, a Western Imperial Rome *occurred at very much the same time*. The politica economic decline of these empires was also manifested in the notable simu taneous decline of Central Asian and maritime trade among them. There

archaeological evidence of the decline and desolation at the same time of a whole string of cities between Kashgar and Bactria and also in India. It certainly seems as if the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ constituted a period of major Eurasian-(system-)wide economic and political decline.

Then, from the mid-seventh century came the rise and expansions of Taika and Nara Japan, Silla Korea, and Tang China in the East. The Chinese and the Turks expanded westward, the Tibetans northward, the Muslims eastward, the Scandinavians southward, and the Byzantines consolidated and held their own as best they could. Meanwhile, Indian, Persian, and Axum power in East Africa declined and/or was replaced by these expansions and rivalries. West Europeans languished for another century until Charles the Great. Is it the case that these far-flung developments occurred simultaneously only by historical accident, or is it more likely that they were 'a sequence of repercussions in a chain' of events running through Central Asia, to recall Grousset's terminology?

A century later, as Beckwith observes,

> the eighth century saw the development of serious crises, and major economic, political and cultural changes in every important Eurasian state. Typologically speaking, these changes followed more or less the same pattern, due no doubt to their common origin in international, specifically economic, change of a fundamental nature.... The great crises of the eighth century were followed by absolutely astonishing economic and cultural growth across Eurasia, from Japan to England. The enormous expansion in trade brought about an explosion in the growth of cities and market towns everywhere. Besides the huge metropolises of Baghdad, Constantinople, and Ch'ang-an, the old [Central Asian] centers of Samarkand and Khwarazam, etc., there were fast-growing cities where once there were none: Rasa, Karabalgasum, Rostov, Quentovic, and many others. The internationalism of the age burst into full bloom, as commerce and culture, hand-in-hand, flourished as never before. (Beckwith 1977:92–94)

Prior to this international development, however, there were at least two periods—in the mid-eighth and again in the mid-ninth centuries—in which major political crises were not only nearly simultaneous but very probably mutually interlinked throughout Eurasia and across Central Asia. About the first of these periods, Beckwith observes:

> It is a curious fact that, unlike the preceding and following centuries, the middle of the eighth century—specifically the period 742 to 755—saw fundamental changes, usually signalled by successful political revolts, in every Eurasian empire. Most famous among them are the Carolignian, Abbasid, Uighur Turkic, and anti-T'ang rebellions, each of which is rightly considered to have been a major watershed in the respective national histories. Significantly, all seem to have been intimately connected with Central Eurasia. (Beckwith 1987:192)

A major event of this period in the history of Central Asia and a turning point in the history of the world was the reversal of Tang Chinese expansion in Asia at the battle at the Talas river in 751. The Arab Muslims and the Turks combined forces and defeated the Tang General Kao Sien-chi (lent to the Chinese by the then flowering Silla kingdom in Korea). He had previously led the Chinese expansion into Central Asia during two victorious campaigns across the Pamirs and into Kushan. The same year, the new Kitai confederacy defeated the Chinese in the northeast; and a Chinese expedition to the southwest into Yunnan failed. Four years later, in 755, began the major eight-year internal rebellion against Tang rule, led by An Lu-shan. He was the son of a Sogdian merchant and a Central Asian woman, who was adopted by a royal concubine. The rebellion was put down with Uighur help from Central Asia. Nonetheless, Tang power and the regime of the Tang Dynasty never really recovered from the external defeat at Talas River in 751 and the internal Lu-shan rebellion from 755 to 763. The weakened Tang Dynasty hung on until 907, after another major rebellion from 874 and 883. China lost all its western territories again; and the Turks and much of Central Asia—eventually right up to the Great Wall of China—became Muslim.

Beckwith (1977) notes that in the course of four years, 838–842, during the second period mentioned above, in the West the trade route between the Volga and the Baltic was closed in 838 (not to reopen for another generation), and the Frankish Empire broke up in 840. In the East, the Uighur Empire fell to the Kirghiz in 840, the Tibetan Empire was split up in 842, and the same year began the open persecution of Buddhism and then of other foreign religions in China. At the same time (after the Arab-Byzantine war of 837–42 and Turkish expansion), the last Caliph in Baghdad began the persecution of heretics under Islamic rule. We may ask again whether it is likely that these political and cultural events are nothing but mutually unrelated responses to 'internal' pressures. Or were they also related to each other and to economic problems or even a crisis common to them all and/or transmitted through Central Asia? We will never know—unless we ask!

Kwanten suggests that at least the decline of Tang power and the simultaneous collapse of the Tibetan empire made geopolitical-economic space for Uighur expansion east and west. Next,

> the Kan-chou Uighurs established themselves on Central Asia's principal trade routes and were soon in control of the trade. They were bent on continuing friendly relations with China [against Chinese demurral during their own difficulties].... It was not until the creation of the Later T'ang dynasty (923–936) that relations were resumed on a regular basis and trade and diplomatic exchanges were revived. The Uighurs became China's principal foreign traders, selling primarily horses, jade, and other precious materials and acquiring primarily silk in return. (Kwanten 1979:53)

> The Uighurs understood the importance of the Chinese connection and immediately replaced the Turks upon their defeat. By aiding the T'ang against rebels, they preserved the dynasty while at the same time terrifying it.... The Uighurs were vastly more successful than the Turks in running a steppe empire, although their conquests were not as extensive. This was due in large measure to the stability of their imperial government.... They ruled their empire from a permanent city [Karabalghasun]... founded and maintained by international trade.... Like the imperial confederacy itself, it grew as a result of the extortion of the Chinese economy. It was the flower of a plant that had its root in [the Tang capital] Ch'ang-an....
>
> [However,] the model for the city was not Chinese but Sogdian.... The Sogdians controlled the oases of Turkestan. They were famous as merchants and had established trading communities in China.... These merchants were also in a position to act as buyers of extorted silk and other goods for trade with the west. Moreover the nomads controlled most of the territory linking the Iranian world with China. Therefore in order to conduct the caravan trade it was necessary to establish cordial relations with the steppe tribes.... Both groups held that trade was a vital resource. (Barfield 1989:154–58)

Inescapably, the study of these and other inter-'national' connections in and through Central Asia are crucial to the reconstruction and understanding the history of all of Afro-Eurasia and of each of its never separate parts.

> Even a cursory examination of the major Arabic and Chinese sources for the period (Tabari and Ssu-ma Kuang, respectively) reveals that Central Eurasia was the overwhelming focus of Arab and Chinese foreign policy and the source of strong cultural influences on them. There should be little doubt that Central Eurasia was a most influential factor in the history of the early medieval empires. Scholars of earlier generations had good reason to look to that region for their 'missing link' in world history. (Beckwith 1987:193–94)

In Gills and Frank (1992) and in the final section of this paper I inquire whether this world history, at least in its Afro-Eurasian 'old'-world 'eastern hemisphere,' may not have presented itself as a long cycle in the world system, during which time Central Asia was indeed the missing link.

2. *Central Asia, World System Structures and Processes*

There has been much recent work on the modern world system since 1500 by Wallerstein and some on its extension backward to 5000 years of world system history by Gills and myself (Gills and Frank 1990/91, 1992; Frank 1990a,b, 1991a,b). All this work is focused on the process of capital accumulation as the principal motor force of world system development (1). It also distinguishes three principal features of world system structure and process: core-periphery structure (2), alternations of hegemony and rivalry (3), and cycles of ascending (4A) and descending (4B) phases in the latter. I suggest that these systemic features may also be useful for the analysis of the historical place and role of Central Asia in the world system.

1. *Capital Accumulation*

On a world scale capital accumulation appears to have been central to the operation of the world system as a whole, even if it did not always seem so for some of its parts. For instance, it has often been observed that in nomadic pastoral societies capital accumulation was difficult if not impossible. Their very mobility was an impediment, and their herds only permitted limited accumulation. This may be so, but we have seen that many of these societies also derived appreciable amounts of income from trade with their sedentary neighbors and from caravans traversing the land, so that they were able to accumulate some capital at least. Moreover, this is one reason why some 'nomadic' societies would settle down for extended periods. Furthermore, Central Asia contained not only to many semi-nomadic societies, but also city-states and principalities in oases and other fixed locations. That is to say, accumulation of capital occurred via production and trade as well.

Most significant however is that world system accumulation need not have taken place in Central Asia itself or, for that matter, in any specific region at all. For a particular region to have played a significant role in the process as a whole it is not necessary that capital accumulation actually took place there; it is enough for Central Asia to have been contributory to or instrumental in accumulation in other places!

My argument here is that Central Asia did participate in important ways in the system-wide process of capital accumulation. This was implicit in the

previous questions and tentative answers, and I want to make it explicit here. However, this capital was accumulated primarily in and to the benefit of outlying 'civilized' sedentary societies. The standard assumption about the latter has been that their accumulation and their very 'civilization' was derived exclusively from their own 'internal' agricultural and other production. Indeed, it has often been argued that these sedentary societies had no use for trade or other relations with their neighbors in Central Asia. This has been the argument by the Chinese themselves and by those who observed them from afar. This argument is still partly accepted and repeated even by such astute recent observers as Barfield (1989). Yet I believe that it is belied by many facts, including those tentatively presented earlier in this paper. The tandem and symbiotic relations between Central Asia and their outlying 'civilized' neighbors contributed significantly to their accumulation of capital and civilization. These relations were 'necessary' to their development in terms of historical fact.

2. *The Core-Periphery Structure*

This structure is often referred to as 'center-periphery.' It is extended to 'semi-periphery' by Wallerstein and to the 'hinterland' by Gills and Frank (1990/91). In the present context, I prefer to use the word 'core' to avoid confusion with my other uses of the term 'center' in Central Asia and its centrality in the world system. Rowlands, Larsen and Kristiansen have already inquired into *Centre and Periphery in the Ancient World*. They review and apply 'dependency and world systems theory ... to stimulate thinking in archaeological and historical research' (1987:11). Referring to ancient Assyria, Rowlands et al. (1987:9) note that 'the function of a periphery is to serve its cosmological centre to assure its proper functioning' so that 'in other words the relation between centre and periphery is organic ... [and not] mechanistic.'

Rowlands et al. concentrate on Mesopotamia and Western Asia, but they also studied Central Asia's relations with its neighbors, as we did (Gills and Frank 1990/91). However, Rowlands et al., especially Philip Kohl, see multiple cores, each with its own periphery, no single Bronze Age world system, and instead a patchwork of overlapping and constantly shifting world systems without direct contact from one end of these systems to the other. Moreover, 'the development of underdevelopment in the Bronze Age was sharply constrained or itself underdeveloped' (Rowlands et al. 1987:3), in particular because there was little technological gap between core(s) and peripheries, and the latter could not monopolize metal working and military technologies.

> Central Asia clearly interacted with South Asia and Iran in the late third millennium, but it was neither a core, periphery or semi-periphery in terms of economic exchange with any of these areas. (Kohl in Rowlands et al. 1987:23)

Perhaps Rowlands and his collaborators try to apply modern world system structures and processes too stringently to the distant past. Direct contact and dependence in its contemporary sense are not necessary to 'demonstrate the existence of a unified world system in any meaningful sense' (p. 23). The many chains of indirect contact we observed above through a patchwork of shifting cores and peripheries may be enough to constitute a system. Moreover, the shifts themselves may have obeyed systemic influences and perhaps cycles, as Rowlands et al. observe. Of course, Rowlands et al. here refer only to the Bronze Age. However, we could still make meaningful sense of a unified world system somewhat later though still one, two or three thousand years before A.D. 1500.

The core concentrates and 'centralizes' the accumulation of capital, including that which is derived from its exploitative structural relation with the periphery and the hinterland. The core need not be the geographical center of the system. Western Europe and Britain were not. Similarly, the geographical center of the system in Central Asia, through which many of the relationships pass, need not be and mostly was not the core of system accumulation. On the contrary, even despite their occasional technological superiority in some respects, the various parts of Central Asia were mostly peripheries or hinterlands to the cores of accumulation in the outlying civilizations and empires.

These cores in East, South and West Asia frequently sought to imperialize and peripheralize parts of Central Asia as inputs to their own processes of accumulation. Even when Central Asians used military superiority to invade and try to dominate these outlying cores, they only succeeded militarily and at best politically, but not economically. That is, even then Central Asia remained subject to the economic exploitation of these cores. At best, the process of accumulation and the structural core-periphery relationship was brought to a temporary halt. Particular ruling groups in these outlying cores may have been eliminated for ever, or they were replaced by new ones from Central Asia itself. Temporarily, there may have been an interregnum of chaos or relative equality. Eventually, however, a similar core-periphery relationship with Central Asians was reestablished, albeit sometimes with ruling groups which had themselves recently come from Central Asia.

The important implication, not only for Central Asia or for these particular cases of its relationship with its surrounding cores, is that military and political dominance was never enough to establish and maintain an economic core-periphery structure. This implication runs counter to most of our received

wisdom, which attributes strength primarily to military capacity and secondarily to other political power. At least, as Samir Amin (1991) repeatedly argued during our Silk Road Expedition, the argument is that political power dominated economic power before 1500. In this view, only under 'capitalism' since then has it been the other way around. Study of the 'centrality' of Central Asia can be most useful in challenging this widely accepted point of view, since the core-periphery relations of accumulation between Central Asia and its outlying sedentary societies seem to disconfirm received theory on this point.

Two periods offer additional interesting evidence: the eleventh and twelfth centuries when the Sung governed 'China among Equals,' to use the title of the book edited by Rossabi (1983), and the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of Mongol rule and the Yuan Dynasty, which he includes in this period. Sung China was economically strong; but it is said that it was politically weak, if only because the empire was split between north and south and/or did not cover so large an area. Moreover, its Jurchen, Khitan and other neighbors to the north and west were its 'equals.' There were several more regional and changing core-periphery structures both in Central and East Asia, and the larger one was suspended since the decline of the Tang dynasty. The lack of—or inability to exercise—control over Central Asian trade during this period may have been an important factor in this lack of power, or was it vice versa? Neither incidentally nor accidentally however, the time of the Sung was also the period of Chinese maritime expansion and strength in and to the south. Which of the two, maritime strength in the southeast and continental weakness in the northwest, was a cause and which an effect may be subject to dispute. However, they surely were not independent, but related.

The period of Mongol ascendancy from Genghis Khan to Kublai Khan has received more attention than any other in the history of Central Asia. I would offer two comments. One is to repeat the observation, for instance of Kwanten and Barfield, that the empire of Genghis Khan did not emerge out of nothing. Instead, it grew out of a long heritage of Central Asian history in combination with the input of the recent strength of several of the Central Asian neighbors of the Mongols. The other observation is that this extraordinary political-economic and military imperial venture of Central Asians in almost all of Eurasia may seem like the exception to my interpretation of Central Asia's place in core-periphery structures. For under Genghis Khan and his immediate successors, Mongolia and its capital at Karakorum seems to have become the core of a system. It thrived on trade with and tribute from the outlying civilizations, which the Mongols promoted like never before. Indeed, the Mongols also used and adapted to civilizational inputs from their neighbors, including the Central Asian Sogdians and Uighurs. But they were the exception that proves the rule: they were unable to maintain this core-periphery

structure with an inadequate productive apparatus of their own. O
was the Mongol-Chinese Yuan dynasty in China. Finally, the 'tradit
lations were re-established under the Ming and then the Manchus. I
the Ming withdrawal from overseas trade and the removal of the
Bejing may have been part and parcel of their need to deal with Centr
and Manchurians on their own terms (cf. McNeill 1983).

3. *Hegemony and Rivalry*

Repetitive alternation between hegemony and rivalry and the role of
power and military power or war is another feature of long stand
world system. Hegemony is by definition a relation of dominance th
cised by one power over others. Yet the ups and downs of hegemony
treated like those of states and empires themselves, as though they ar
primarily if not exclusively from dynamics that are 'internal' to the he
power. That is the procedure, for instance, in much of Paul Kennedy
bestseller *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. Yet hegemony, and
war, is not only a relation between A, B and C . . . , but a feature of
system of which they are all but parts. In this system, the hegemon
power is soon replaced by that of another. This usually happens
interval of intense rivalry and war among various contenders, inclu
old hegemonial power. A 'system' of temporary and shifting alliance
and parcel of this process of hegemony-rivalry. It has relevance fo
Asia and its place in the world system in several ways.

To begin with, hegemony, rivalry, war and alliances in their supp
always characterized nomadic, semi-nomadic, and sedentary peop
Central Asia. Barfield (1989) analyzed how the establishment and c
of one tribe's and ruler's hegemony over others was a function of its
economic relations with neighboring sedentary economies and the
Therefore, changing relations of hegemony and rivalry, shifting allia
wars—all of these played important roles in the structural core-peri
lations between Central Asian and neighboring societies. There w
instances of regional and even Eurasian-wide shifts of hegemony
Central Asia, only some of which we have noted above. Philip Kohl (
19) mentions some early cases relative to the 'decline' of Turkmenist
end of the third millennium B.C. He summarizes five interpretations:
mental degradation, 'barbarian' invasions, a shift from overland to
trade related to the expansion of Harappan civilization, over-urba
and colonization or emigration to Margiana (Merv) and Bactria. How
last of these suggests to Kohl that the 'decline' was posed as a 'false

> A crisis in urbanization or social devolution in southern Central Asia (and by extension throughout areas farther to the south) never occurred. Urban life did not collapse, but settlements shifted in Central Asia to the lowland plain formed by the lower Murghab and the southern and northern Bactrian plains.... The known core area of southern Turkmenistan was replaced by new centers in Bactria and Margiana at the end of the third and beginning of the second millennium. (Kohl 1987:19)

I suggest that such shifts among hegemonial centers and peripheries occurred repeatedly and countless times in the history of Central Asia and the world since that time. Moreover, shifts in the long-distance routes, occasioned by climate, economics or politics, repeatedly helped raise some new areas and cities to prominence and centrality. These same shifts converted once-flourishing areas into decadent backwaters, which were then bypassed by history itself. At issue in them is not only the 'rise' and 'decline' of particular areas, peoples, economies and polities. These shifts among its parts and their relations represented and expressed changes, transformations and the development of the *system as a whole*—which was probably cyclical.

Most interesting perhaps is the question of Central Asia's place and role in world-wide shifts of hegemony. I implicitly referred to several earlier such shifts in the historical review above. A more recent shift is examined by Janet Abu-Lughod (1989:338) in her *Before European Hegemony. The World System A.D. 1250–1350* when she wrote that '"the fall of the East" preceded "the Rise of the West".' That is, there was a hegemonial shift from east to west in the world system as a whole. Abu-Lughod, like Wallerstein, argues that the system since 1500 is a different one from the preceding one(s). I argue that *the same world system* experienced a hegemonial shift (Frank 1990a,b, 1991a and especially 1991b; Gills and Frank 1990/91 and especially 1992). This shift was very significant for the history and place of Central Asia in the world, since it involved a transfer of hegemony from the center of gravity westward within Eurasia and from the importance of continental political economic and military relations to overseas maritime ones. 'Sea power in world history' (to use Admiral Mahan's celebrated phrase) already rose in importance during the ascendencies of Sung China and Venice, Genoa, etc. Yet before the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, sea power and maritime trade only competed with but did not offset Central Asia. Since then, sea power, maritime trade and the westward shift of the world's center of gravity have left Central Asia in the dark.

There may be disputes about exactly when and why trans-Central Asian trade declined in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, and whether the decline was absolute or only relative to expanding trade elsewhere. The relation of this trade through Central Asia and the seventeenth-century crisis is also of interest. So is the revival of trade during the eighteenth century

world-economic expansion and commercial revolution, but now along the more northerly trans-Siberian route. Morris Rossabi (1990) recognizes a clear decline of the caravan trade in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries but observes a revival along a more northerly route in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. Therefore, Rossabi argues, the earlier decline could not have been due to competition from maritime trade and must be attributed instead to political instability along the southern caravan route. Yet another explanation is equally or more plausible: both the caravan trade *and* political conditions responded to cyclical economic considerations. Trade may have declined and political instability increased during the seventeenth-century economic crisis, and trade as well as Russian administration in Siberia increased and improved during the eighteenth-century recovery and expansion. Nonetheless, however much anyone, like Rossabi and Isenbike Togan (1990S), may wish to look into the ins and outs of changing relations within Central Asia and between its and neighboring peoples since the sixteenth century, the far-reaching impact of the major shift in world history across the Atlantic is inescapable.

Braudel and others have demonstrated that this shift still required at least one to two centuries. "The general decadence comes over the Mediterranean in the XVII century. In the XVII century, we say, not in the XVI, as is usually claimed" (Braudel 1953:368). Textile manufacture reached its maximum in Venice in 1592. In Liorna and probably elsewhere in Italy the bales of silk "unloaded *over the maritime route* continued to the end of the [sixteenth] century: there is not the slightest sign of decline" (Braudel 1953:368–71). At the same time, there was "prosperity in the Read Sea" and "it is true that the old spice route again recovers and prospers after the middle of the [sixteenth] century." "Thus, the Levant trade was not interrupted, neither in the direction of Syria nor in the direction of Egypt" (Braudel 1953:457, 459, 469). That is, the maritime trade routes through the Eastern Mediterranean retained their prosperity at least through the end of the sixteenth century.

However, so did both the circum Asian maritime *and* the trans-Asian overland routes through Central Asia. Nor did European intervention, bolstered as it was by its new financial strength derived from the Atlantic trade, yet change much in the circum-Asian maritime trade. The European sixteenth century pioneers in this Asian maritime trade were the Portuguese. However,

> The Portuguese colonial regime, built upon war, coercion, and violence, did not at any point signify a stage of "higher development" economically for Asian trade. The traditional commercial structure continued to exist, however much damaged by religious wars breaking out between Moslems and Christians. Trade did not undergo any increase in quantity worthy of mention in the period. The commercial and economic forms of the Portuguese colonial regime were the same as those of

> Asian trade and Asian authority. . . . The Portuguese colonial regime, then, did not introduce a single new element into the commerce of southern Asia. (van Leur 1955: 117–18)

Finally, during the sixteenth century the circum-Asian maritime trade did not yet displace the trans-Asian caravan trade or the place of Central Asia therein.

> The destructive effects of the discovery of the sea route to Asia upon the traditional intercontinental trade routes was not felt until after the elapse of an entire century. After a set-back at the beginning of the 16th century the trade routes through the Middle East regained their former importance, and at the end of the 16th century the transcontinental caravan trade reached dimensions which must presumably be regarded as its historical culmination. (Steensgaard 1972:9)

Indeed, around 1600 all the silk still moved overland by caravan. Moreover, the tonnage of spices brought westward and to Europe by caravan through Central Asia was still twice that brought by ship (Steensgaard 1972:56–57). Thus, up to the end of the sixteenth century, Central Asia continued to hold its own in overland trade against both the South Asian maritime trade and the West Asian, Mediterranean and Atlantic trades.

The seventeenth century witnessed economic decline. But this was a cyclical decline, which was common to all of these regions and routes, including the Americas, during the seventeenth century world economic crisis. As already noted, in the eighteenth century, trade revived again across Central Asia, albeit along a more northerly route. However, the eighteenth century also finally brought on the "commercial revolution" and the growth of "triangular trade" across the Atlantic (Frank 1978). That finally served also to shift the center of gravity of trade from the East, including Central Asia, to the West.

4. *Cycles*

A fourth feature in the world system is its cyclical change. Indeed, cycles seem to characterize all systems. All cosmic existence and biological life seems to be in cycles. Other observers of Central Asia and our review of its relations with its neighbors above have identified numerous ups and downs which seem to be cyclical, that is, endogenously self-reproducing. Lattimore entitled the last chapter of his *Inner Asian Frontiers* 'The Cycles of Dynastic and Tribal History,' and asks, 'But why were the cycles repetitive? ... There is a striking resemblance between the origins of Chinese dynasties and of dynasties beyond the Great Wall' (1962:536, 540). He asks whether these 'two interacting cycles ... were independent of each other' and answers that 'the nomad cycle was at least in part a product of the Chinese cycle' (*ibid.*:550). Yet, as Lattimore goes on to note, the nomad cycle also began 'to interact on the cyclical history

of China with independent force' (*ibid.*:551). Similarly, Barfield (1989:10) writes of 'a cyclical pattern to this relationship, which repeated itself three times over the course of two thousand years.' Yet Barfield's long cycles also contained shorter ones in turn. Surely, cyclical relations have been or can be identified also between Central Asians and their neighbors to the south and west. Some aspects of Huntington's (1907) 'Pulse of Asia' may have been among them. Certainly, the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ seem to have been a major instance of Eurasian-(system-)wide economic and political crisis.

At the end of the introduction to *Centre and Periphere in the Ancient World*, Rowlands et al. conclude:

> In all these arguments, it is ultimately the temporal that is seen to dominate over the spatial shifts in the waxing and waning of particular centres. . . . It has not been sufficiently appreciated that a theory of cyclical change also includes a theory of shifts of centres in space. In other words, expansion and contraction processes have rarely been geographically stable. In the case of shorter cycles, this may involve intra-regional shifts in influence between competing centres within a single core area. . . . However, it has been frequently claimed that these oscillations in intra-core hegemony are interspersed by much larger-scale shifts in the arrangements of centres and their peripheries. (Rowlands et al. 1987:11, 10)

However, Rowlands et al. also correctly note that 'the question is more whether the long-term cycles exist at all as autonomous determinants ... rather than being formed from a coalescence of shorter cycles of political expansion and decay' (Rowlands et al. 1987:9).

Similarly, Gills and Frank (1990/91, 1992) pose questions about cycles not only of capital accumulation, core-periphery relations and hegemony-rivalry on regional levels. We also suggest the possible existence of cycles of 'super-accumulation' and of 'super-hegemony' and rivalry on a world system-wide basis since at least 1700 B.C. This allows me to raise a related question about the cycles of Sino-Nomad relations identified by Lattimore, Barfield and others, as well as similar cycles elsewhere: May these cycles not also be part and parcel of system-wide cycles of accumulation, core-periphery relations and hegemony-rivalry?

The major crises mentioned above (or perhaps it should be considered as a single protracted crisis) of the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ and again of the seventh and eighth centuries, could lead us to answer this question in the affirmative—and should lead us to look for other such historical instances (as in Gills and Frank 1992). Similarly, Sinor (1977:105) argues on the one hand that trans-Asian trade became brisker when great nomad states flourished and improved conditions of travel. On the other hand, we observed above that Morris Rossabi (1990) attributes the late sixteenth-century decline and

eighteenth-century revival in caravan trade to political considerations. However, perhaps at these and at other times, the nomad states flourished and trade expanded when and because the Eurasian economy as a whole was in a cyclical upswing. Concomitantly, trade may have declined and people fought more over a smaller economic pie—and smaller rakeoffs from the caravan trade—in times of cyclical downswing.

Gills and Frank (1992) try to trace a system-wide long cycle through alternating upswings and downswings of some two hundred years each back through history to at least 1700 B.C. (and of shorter duration since 1450). In that paper and in Frank 1991b I argue that the 'European' cycle of expansion between 1050 and 1250, contraction between 1250 and 1450, and (renewed rather than original) expansion between 1450 and 1600 and more recent, was part of a wider cycle in the world system as a whole. From this perspective it then appears that the 'B' down phase in *this* world cycle found its resolution in the aforementioned westward shift of hegemony. This shift left Central Asia in the historical lurch ever since. Of course, this interpretation leads not only to the easy acceptance of the continuation of the westward hegemonial shift first across the Atlantic and now across the Pacific. It leaves room to ask if Central Asia's time may not also come again, be it as another wave of (more peaceful) outward migration (whose half-millennial 'pulse' is already overdue) if only because unemployed labor, or otherwise.

A fifth important and perhaps even more neglected characteristic structure and (also cyclical?) process in the world system, and especially in Central Asia, are bottom-up mass social movements. I looked into their cyclical history of the past two centuries in various parts of the world in Fuentes and Frank (1989) and Frank and Fuentes (1990). Grass-roots social movements of liberation and/or opposition, often taking ethnic and/or religious forms, have certainly played important roles in Central Asia and elsewhere for a long time. One problem is determining their historical provenance, if any, and recognizing its importance. The point is that we will never find unless we look, which very few historians do.

3. *Some Obvious (?) Conclusions about Civilization and Settlement in Central Asia*

From an analytic point of view, there seems to be much promise in extending the world system approach much farther back in history and 'outward' to include Central Asia. In particular, we must try to relate the cycles within Central Asia to the cyclical history of other parts of Afro-Eurasia. Perhaps they were part and parcel of one world system cycle. Even scholars who expect little from a world 'system' approach, must recognize that one cannot leave Central Asia unrelated to the rest of the world, to whose history Central Asia was in many ways 'central.'

From a more popular point of view, we should reject the derogatory names applied to Central Asians; and we should stop belittling their historical significance and accomplishments. The supposed distinctions between 'civilized' and 'barbarian' people are more than doubtful, and the idea that Central Asian peoples were 'barbarian' should be abandoned altogether. It is dismaying indeed that (after Owen Lattimore's exile by McCarthyism) the editor of the prestigious *Cambridge History of Inner Asia* (1990) and perhaps best-known American Central Asianist, Denis Sinor (1969:5), could still introduce a 'syllabus' for the U.S. Office of Education dedicated to promoting teachers' and their students' knowledge of the area and its peoples by writing that 'the history of Central Eurasia is a history of the barbarian.' Very properly therefore, Christopher Beckwith (1990) has recently powerfully argued against this usage, also on the basis of the etymology of the word. Even the few indications about Central Asians above should make it obvious that they were not 'barbarian' in the sense of the common usage of the term. Moreover, there is much reason to doubt that many Central Asians were in any sense less 'civilized' than their neighbors, even if the latter reached higher levels of 'civilization'—in part owing to their relations with Central Asians and through them with other civilizations. It is, rather, the lack of civil and civilized Sinocentric, Eurocentric etc. thinking and behavior which leads exponents to denigrate their neighbors from Central Asia and elsewhere. They probably could find some of their own forefathers among them, if they cared to look.

Similarly, the supposed distinctions between Central Asian nomads and sedentary people elsewhere may obscure much more than they clarify. We have noted in passing that Central Asians themselves were nomadic, semi-

nomadic, semi-sedentary, and sedentary in all sorts of combinations and successions. They also had cities, big and small; agriculture, near and far; mining, metallurgy, and manufacturing; trade and its adjunct of written record keeping, and of course other culture and 'high' religion. Sedentary peoples also moved about. Moreover, they incorporated many 'nomad' invaders and other migrants into their own way of life. An intermediary category on the frontier between agricultural China and pastoral nomads on the steppes, suggested by Lattimore (1962) and others, may be useful to analyze the *structural* relationships across the shifting frontiers. However, as a category of people it is no more useful than calling them or others 'semi-feudal.' Moreover, rulers in China and in other outlying civilized areas repeatedly sent people into or across the 'Inner Asian frontiers' to Central Asia. They also resorted to often forced migration to form agricultural colonies, military garrisons to protect them, or the former to feed the latter. The ones often became the captives of the others across the frontier. Thus, these sedentary peoples set up or occupied a category of intermediaries, between themselves and others. In so doing, the sedentary societies helped diffuse and permeate the supposed distinctions between themselves and others. Despite his reference to 'nomads' in his sub-title and throughout his book Barfield (1989) also has doubts about the hard-and-fast distinction between them and their 'settled' neighbors. Thus, 'nomadic pastoral' and 'settled agricultural' are not so much fixed types or categories of peoples as they are temporary conditions, which different people(s) adopt according to changing circumstances.

We would do much better to treat Central Asia, its peoples and their history like anybody else in the world. We should recognize their centrally important part, role, and contribution in world history for what it long was, and again may come to be. I hope that this essay by someone who is neither a Central Asian nor a specialist on the area can help stimulate others to devote more incisive attention and more qualified study to this area. May this help convert Central Asia from the sort of dark hole in the middle that it was, to a real black hole whose gravitational attraction can soon engulf the outside and outsiders.

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